

No. 421

NEW YORK, JAN. 14, 1911

FIVE CENTS

# BRAVE AND BOLD

## WEEKLY

FIRE, FAME AND FORTUNE

OR Making A Name For Himself



By  
**JOHN L.  
DOUGLAS**

A cheer which was heard at every desk in the Treasury Building, and penetrated the inner recesses of the White House, arose like a roar from the people.



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# BRAVE AND BOLD

## WEEKLY

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# FIRE, FAME AND FORTUNE;

OR,

## Making a Name for Himself.

By JOHN L. DOUGLAS.

### CHAPTER I.

#### TURNUED AWAY FROM HOME.

The sun was shining brightly as Lawrence Vernon took his street-coat and exchanged it for a linen office-jacket. He was a bright lad of seventeen, and was employed in the office of Vernon, Mackenzie & Co., shipping agents and brokers, in Exchange Street, New York City.

The senior partner, Wilson Vernon, was the father of two sons, Bryce, a big, loutish sort of young man, given to rather wild and extravagant ways, and Lawrence, whose acquaintance we have already made.

Though Bryce and Lawrence were brothers, no one would have thought it, had not the fact been most positively ascertained and fairly substantiated.

Even then old friends of the family hinted that Bryce must be a changeling, for he was totally unlike either his father or the sweet mother, whose smile was like an angel's blessing, and who died when Gladys, her only daughter, was born.

Bryce, nineteen years of age, was also a clerk in his father's office, but too often he sauntered in late, for many of his evenings were spent in dissipation.

"Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Vernon wishes to see you," said the office clerk, in the most solemn manner, about an hour after the office had opened for the day's business.

The youth entered the private office, and found his father looking very stern and cross.

"Lawrence, I have always found you truthful; can I still trust you?"

"Certainly, father; why do you ask?"

"Do you remember going to the bank last Monday?"

"I go every day, sir."

"That is an evasion. I asked you about last Monday."

Lawrence turned alternately pale and red.

What he had dreaded had at last to be met.

"I do, sir."

"Did you draw out any money?"

"I—— The books will show, sir."

"So you still equivocate. Look at that check; have you ever seen it before?"

Lawrence took the strip of paper, which purported to be an authorization from the firm of Vernon, Mackenzie & Co., to the Bank of the Republic, to pay the bearer the sum of eighty-five dollars in legal money of the United States.

The youth looked at the paper, and every letter seemed to burn into his very soul.

He knew that the check was a forgery.

He cashed it innocently enough, but afterward the crime was revealed to him.

"Have you seen that check before?"

"Yes, sir."

"You drew that money?"

"I did."

The answer was given in a tremulous voice.

"You knew that the check was a forgery?"

Lawrence remained silent. His father varied the question.

"Is that signature a forgery?"

"I believe so, sir."



"You know it is."

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do with the money?"

"I cannot tell."

"It makes no difference. I know all. It was not enough that you should fall into the hands of reprobates, and so disgrace your father's name, but you must commit forgery in order to rescue yourself."

"I?"

"Do not speak like that. Your brother has pleaded with me to forgive you—"

"My brother—pleaded?"

"What is the matter? Are you surprised that Bryce should intercede?"

"I am not guilty."

"Do not add lying to your other crime. I have promised Bryce that I would not prosecute you, though your guilt is so clear—I do not know whether I am doing right, but I have promised. Go; and remember this, that you are no longer son of mine. Let me never hear your name, or see your face again."

"Father!"

"Go!"

"Hear me. I swear I am innocent. By the memory of my dead mother, I swear it."

"Mention not her name. It is sacrilege. Thank Heaven she has not lived to see this day. Go! I will not hear another word."

Lawrence Vernon left his father's presence, heartbroken and sad.

His whole life was ruined.

And yet, even to save himself, he would not betray another, or break his word.

As he passed out of the office into the street he met Bryce.

"Bryce, do you know?" he asked.

"Has the pater cut up rough?" asked the eldest born.

"He has turned me out—has even prohibited me calling myself by my own name."

"You don't say so?"

"It is true. And you are the cause of it."

"Am I?"

"Bryce, save me. I did not know the check was forged when you gave it to me. When I handed you the money, you told me for the first time that you had used father's name without his consent. Why did you do it?"

"I was in a tight fix. I knew the pater would not give the money. It was such a small check that I thought it would slip through unnoticed."

"But it hasn't, and I am ruined."

"Sorry for you, Larry, but it will all come right; I'll talk to the pater, and I'll get Gladys to do so."

"You have talked too much. You said that I had got mixed up with low characters—"

"Ha, ha, ha! that is a good joke. Why, Jim Cairns, the pugilist, called to see me, and— Well, I owed him some money for bets—he came for it. The pater saw me talking to him. I hinted that Jim was trying to lead you astray. See? The pater jumped to the conclusion that you were the scapegrace. It is too bad, but it will come right in the end."

"Go to father, and tell him all—please do."

"Not much. You'll pull through all right."

"You will not tell the truth about it?"

"No, I'll see you hanged first; but I'm awfully sorry. Say, do you want any money? I have ten dollars I can let you have—"

"I would rather die than touch the money. Oh, Bryce, for our dead mother's sake, for our little sister's sake, do clear me."

"And land myself in Queer Street. No, my foolish brother, that would be too high a price to pay."

Human nature cannot bear everything, and Lawrence Vernon staggered away like a drunken man.

Disgraced, turned from his home! What could he do? Where could he go?

He crossed the ferry to Brooklyn.

Scarcely knowing where he was going, or why, he reached Greenwood Cemetery, and fell across his mother's grave.

His hot, scalding tears sprinkled the grass, and his soul went out to that land where, with the angels, she dwelt.

And while Lawrence was lying asleep and exhausted on that grave in Greenwood, his father, brother, and sister met at the dinner-table at home.

"Where is Lawrence?" asked Gladys, a very pretty girl of fifteen summers.

Wilson Vernon turned pale at the question; Bryce poured out a glass of wine, and professed not to have heard the question.

"Where is Lawrence, papa? He is usually so punctual."

"Gladys, never mention his name again."

"Papa, what an unseemly jest."

"It is no jest. Would that it were! I have saved him from a felon's cell—"

"A felon's cell! Papa, what do you mean?"

"Do not spoil our dinner, Gladys; we can talk afterward," said Bryce, who was feeling very uneasy.

But the girl was not to be silenced so easily.

She looked into the soup, but could not eat any. Her heart was full to overflowing.

"Papa, tell me all. What does it mean?"

"It is as well, perhaps. Lawrence forged the name of our firm to a check, and spent the money on low characters—"

"It cannot be."

"He admits it."

"There is some mistake—some fearful mistake."

"No, alas! there is no mistake. He is no longer son of mine. I must ask you to forget him—"

"Impossible! Bryce, why are you so silent? You do not believe Larry guilty?"

"There is but little doubt, sister mine."

"There, there, that is enough. Now let the whole thing be dropped. I have cursed him, and shall curse you, either of you, if you ever mention his name again in my hearing."

The hot tears fell from Gladys' eyes, and she arose from the table, not daring to stay another moment.

Food would choke her. Her heart was breaking.

Lawrence guilty of such a crime!

No, she would not believe it.

She knelt before a portrait of her mother, and with many sobs and tears asked Heaven to intercede for her much-loved brother.

## CHAPTER II.

### FIRE!

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

The cry rang along the streets, and the people rushed from their houses.

"Where is it?"

The question was on every tongue, and various answers were given.

Some had asked the negro who was the first to raise the alarm, and the vague answer he gave left them no wiser.

"Ober dar!"

But exactly where "over there" meant, was hard to understand.

All sorts of conjectures were made, and all kinds of surmises passed current among the people, until one tall, down-east Yankee, who was just as desirous of seeing the fire as any one, but had patience, called out to his friends:

"Say, I guess I'll wait just here until the engine goes past, and then I'll folly."



The suggestion was so sensible that nearly every one adopted it.

At the N Street station the alarm was given.

Almost before the location of the fire was known, the engine appeared at the door, and a couple of horses were harnessed ready.

In the twinkling of an eye the horses were starting.

The firemen were in their places, fastening belts and adjusting helmets as they stood on the engine.

There was no hurry, no excitement; everything was done in as orderly a manner as if time was no object, and yet two minutes had not elapsed since Julius Cæsar, the darky, had given the alarm.

What an exciting drive it is on one of those fine engines!

It looks like a pair of runaways harnessed to a fiery demon.

Surely the driver is reckless.

He cannot guide those horses!

People gape as it passes by, and look after it until it is out of sight, half-expecting to see a smash.

"Buttons," the firemen's dog, is as eager as the men to reach the fire.

He understands his duty.

Buttons runs ahead, barking and yelping as much as to say: "Clear the way, the engine is coming!"

Then the engine followed; at every street the clang, clang, clang of the bell aroused the people, and warned drivers and pedestrians of their peril.

The firemen shouted, as if to keep in time with the bell:

"Hi, hi, hi!"

The cry was well known. The people cheered the brave men as they passed, and as some one in the crowd would recognize a fireman, he would shout out the name by way of encouragement.

"Go it, Bangs!"

"Bravo, Eggleston!"

"See, there's the pluckiest and daringest chap of the lot!" shouted one of the crowd, as he recognized young John Lawrence sitting on the hose-reel, and handling the ribbons with all the ease of an old-time coachman, and yet with the abandon of a circus-rider.

John Lawrence was indeed well worth more than a passing glance.

He was the beau ideal of a driver, and although he had only been in the Washington Fire Department a few months, he had won for himself a renown, which many an older man would have given half his salary to have had.

As the engines, the hose-reel, the ladder-wagon, and the superintendent's buggy dashed madly down Pennsylvania Avenue, the drive was easy enough.

The broad thoroughfare—the credit and glory of the Capital City—was well suited for rapid driving.

The great thoroughfare was crowded, but still room was easily made, and every one made the progress of the firemen as easy as possible.

The guests rushed out of Willard's, the ladies thronged to the windows, and some waved their handkerchiefs as the heroes passed by.

For firemen are heroes, every one, and as deserving of praise as many upon whom Congress has bestowed its medal.

The engines turned up Fifteenth Street, and rattled around the corner into F Street at a tremendous pace.

Then the driving became more difficult.

The clang, clang, clang of the bell was made more emphatic by the shouting of the men, and little Buttons barked and yelped almost angrily, because the street was not cleared fast enough.

To pass through such a crowd as was to be found in F Street required the most dexterous driving, and even as it was, there were some wonderful escapes.

The crowd that followed the engines was a good-humored one. It was composed of boys, young men who had noth-

ing to do, idlers, aroused to action by the thought of "a free show," men who loved to see deeds of daring and courage, government clerks who happened to be in the vicinity, and quite a number of women and girls.

The fire was on Madison Avenue, and the flames were already bursting through the windows.

"The roof, sir?" asked Eggleston, as the superintendent looked at every point of the building.

"Not yet. Let the men try the second floor; perhaps they can reach the fire from there!"

Eggleston gave orders, and soon three helmeted firemen were on the second floor, directing the hose so that the water played directly upon the fire.

The hissing, sputtering sound, followed by a stream of white steam, showed that the water had reached the fire.

"Any one in the house, sir?" the superintendent asked Bertram Llewellyn, the owner of the house.

"No, I think not. Really, I must inquire; I was so confused—"

"Quite natural, sir; but find out, will you?"

Then, as if to give a hint to the confused and nervous house owner, the fireman added:

"Mrs. Llewellyn, is she safe?"

"Yes, she has gone over to the Riggs House."

"And Miss Flora—"

"Yes. I know now, all are safe. The servants were not the last to leave the house— Why, Flora, is anything the matter?"

A young girl had pushed her way through the crowd and stood by her father's side, but her eyes were wandering in every direction.

"Angela, papa, have you seen her?"

"No, my dear; is she not with you and your mama?"

"No, papa. I am afraid she is in the house."

"Why do you think so?"

"She was not feeling well. Her head was aching, and she went to lie down."

The superintendent had heard the whole conversation, and abruptly asked:

"Which room?"

"Third floor, back room," answered Flora calmly.

But the very calmness was unnatural, for she became almost hysterical immediately, and called for her friend and guest.

The fire was making considerable headway, and the men had been driven from the second floor to the roof.

No signs of any person being in the house had been seen, and therefore no search was made.

"Third floor, how is it?" asked Mr. Coleman, the superintendent.

"Blazing like a furnace in front, sir; back scarcely warm."

"A young lady may be in the back room. Can you get to her?"

"Impossible, sir, unless—"

"What?"

"We can get around to the back."

"There is not time, I am afraid. Get Eggleston to go over the roof."

"All right, sir."

But another had heard the conversation.

John Lawrence had quickly reared a ladder. It only reached the second-floor windows.

He ran up another—it was still too short.

Then a third one was raised, and the young fireman—who looked almost boyish in his uniform—began the ascent.

"Come down, Lawrence. It is certain death to pass through those flames," shouted Coleman.

"Let me try, sir," shouted back the young hero.

He had not paused in his ascent, and if Mr. Coleman answered him he did not hear what was said.

Up, step by step, with the agility of an acrobat, the young hero went.



His head was only a few inches below the third-story window.

Just as he arose above the sill, a fierce tongue of flame darted through the window, and seemed to enwrap him in its embrace.

He clung to the ladder, or he would have fallen.

Bending his head forward until his chin was on his chest, he leaped into the room.

The flames lapped around him, and a groan went up from a hundred breasts.

Holding his arms across his face to shield his eyes, the brave Lawrence rushed through the room, stepping on blazing timber, and pushing aside fiery furniture and curtains which seemed to claim him in a holocaust of death.

He burst open the door leading into the back room, and a delicious cool breeze fanned his cheek, but only for a moment.

The flames followed him.

They caught the bedclothes and the lace curtains.

On the bed, apparently asleep, rested one of the most beautiful girls Lawrence had ever seen.

At first he staggered back, for he thought the figure was spectral, so perfectly beautiful in face and form.

Then he stepped forward, and almost exclaimed, "'Tis a statue."

But, statue or flesh, he meant to rescue it from the flames.

He raised the body from the bed.

A sigh came from the lips.

He knew that there was no time for any attempt at revivication, for the bedclothing was a sheet of flame.

Seizing a rug from the floor, he wrapped it around the girl, and snatched a blanket from amid the burning sheets. This he covered over her head.

To escape through the front room was impossible.

The floor had given way.

A mighty seething caldron of flame, reaching from the cellar up nearly to the roof, was before him.

He turned to the back window just as Eggleston was lowering a rope, by which he intended descending.

"Hold fast," shouted Lawrence.

The fireman looked down and saw his comrade.

"Hold fast, I am coming up."

"Any girl in there?" asked Eggleston.

"Yes, I've got her. She has fainted."

The heat was intense.

Lawrence felt his face blistering.

He reached out for the rope, and tied it around his waist.

Clasping Angela close to him, he shouted:

"Haul up!"

Slowly the rope was drawn up toward the roof.

Once it stopped, some of its strands snapped, and Lawrence expected momentarily to be dashed to pieces on the stones below.

Again the rope moved, slowly, oh, so slowly, it seemed hours in moving a yard.

Willing hands reached over the parapet and clutched the brave fireman.

Another moment, and he was lifted, with his burden, to the roof.

He staggered across to the front, and as he was recognized a loud cheer—a cheer which was heard at every desk in the Treasury Building, and penetrated the inner recesses of the White House, arose like a roar from the people.

"Angela!" shouted Flora Llewellyn.

But Angela was unconscious.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "HE IS A MYSTERY."

The house was a complete wreck.

It had been so combustible, and the flames had spread so rapidly, that had the house been in a poorer neighborhood

and belonged to a man in only moderate circumstances, there would have been a suspicion of incendiarism, for a representative of the fire insurance office had been quickly at the scene of the conflagration, and had muttered to himself that it was a good thing Llewellyn was so heavily insured.

But no one doubted Mr. Llewellyn's honor.

He was wealthy. In fact, the boast had been made more than once that there wasn't a bank in Washington which would refuse to honor old Llewellyn's check for half a million dollars.

So the few paltry thousands of fire insurance could not be of any use to him as an incentive to crime.

The engines had returned to their various stations, and only three firemen remained on duty at the burned mansion.

In Room 77 of the Riggs House sat Bertram Llewellyn and his family.

He was a man pretty fairly advanced in years, but his wife was several years younger than himself.

So, while his hair was as white as driven snow, hers was of raven hue, and not a wrinkle had appeared upon the smooth, velvety skin of the handsome face.

Flora, the only daughter of the house, combined the beauty of her mother with the sturdiness of her father.

She had reached her fifteenth birthday, and already posed as a young lady, looking anxiously forward to "coming out."

She was as tall as her mother, and often the two were taken for sisters, so young-looking was the matron.

Her cousin, Angela Winan, was on a visit to Washington, her home being in St. Louis.

Angela was nearly two years older than Flora, and was just as beautiful, as Lawrence had declared when he saw her lying unconscious on the bed in the burned dwelling.

She was in another room, attended by a physician, for she had been nearly asphyxiated with the smoke.

"My dear, did you ask that brave fireman's name?" asked Mrs. Llewellyn.

"No, Agnes. The man only did his duty, and if one were to ask every man's name who did his duty, one's memory would have to be a regular street-directory," answered her husband, rather brusquely.

"But he saved Angela's life!"

"I admit that, and I have been thinking I would send him a hundred dollars as a little token of thanks. Coleman will know to whom to give it."

Mrs. Llewellyn was rather hurt at the sordid answer.

"Do you think he would accept it?"

"Of course he would. These men make a business of it, and are not too extravagantly paid."

"But he is a gentleman; I am sure of it."

"A gentleman? Why, Agnes, you might as well look for one in the ranks of private soldiers as in the fire-brigade. No, no, he is some fellow who likes dangerous work."

"Papa, how can you speak like that?" asked Flora.

"Puss, are you going to make a hero of this man?"

"Why not? I think he is the greatest hero in Washington. Did you not hear Mr. Coleman call him down and say he would lose his life if he persisted?"

"Oh, well, I'll look after him, and won't hurt his feelings. How is Angela?"

"She is very much better, papa; and when I told her of the brave fireman, she said: 'Do find out who he is, so that I can thank him, and papa must thank him as well.'"

"You are two silly girls. There, now! run back to your cousin, and don't get your head full of such nonsense. Trust me, Flora; he only did just what any one else would have done if he were paid for it."

Such was the sordid idea of Bertram Llewellyn, who was a great admirer of the almighty dollar, and believed that its love was the great incentive to all ambition and to all heroism.



Mrs. Llewellyn was more romantic; perhaps it was because she still was an ardent reader of fiction.

She fully believed that the fireman was a prince in disguise, or at least some rich man's son who left the luxuries of his home to pursue the noble calling of a life-saver.

In the N Street fire-station, at the same hour, the surgeon was dressing several scars and burns on the face and hands of John Lawrence.

The young hero had not murmured.

He had not even referred to his gallant act.

To all appearances he thought he had only done his duty.

But he was romantic, also.

"What a perfect face!" he thought. "Why, there is nothing in the Corcoran Gallery to excel it in beauty. I wonder why we look back to Ancient Greece for our types of beauty, when we have so much that is perfect now? They called her Angela! How the name fits her! Angela—Angel! I wonder who she is, and whether I shall ever see her again. But better not; who am I, that I should dare to think of her?"

"Dreaming again, Lawrence?"

The cheery voice of Superintendent Coleman broke in on the young man's reverie.

"Yes, sir. The doctor tells me I am to lie perfectly still for a couple of days, for he says I shall be disfigured if I do not."

"You are a brave fellow. Will you not look upon me as a friend?"

"I do, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know that, but you know what I mean. There is some secret in your past life—ah, do not tremble like that. I do not know what it is, but don't you think you would feel better if you told me?"

"No, sir, I can never do that. When I came to you a few months ago, led, as I think, by Providence to you, just as I accidentally heard you say there was a vacancy in the department, I told you I was without friends; I was really alone in the world, and I asked you if you could take me without references, without inquiry."

"And I said yes. I liked you the first moment I saw you, and I determined I would be your friend."

"You have been very good to me. I might have been dishonest——"

"No, I read honesty in your eyes."

"Idle——"

"No, that I was sure you were not."

"Why were you sure?"

"Because, if you had been idle or lazy, you would have entered the army; most of that class do. But you are well educated, you write well, you would speedily make your way in one of the departments. Won't you let me try and obtain a position for you?"

"No, Mr. Coleman, I appreciate your kindness, but I want to be here. In a position where I am nobody, where no one will ever expect to find me, and where I shall be free from what you call society."

"You are a strange fellow, Lawrence, but I trust you. Congress will vote you a medal some day, and the department will give you one for your heroism yesterday."

"I only did my duty, sir."

"Perhaps so, but how few are there who will forget their own lives in endeavoring to save others."

"Many, sir, believe me. Others would have done just as I did, and perhaps have been a little less clumsy."

As Coleman walked away he could not help saying to the doctor, who accompanied him:

"That young fellow is a mystery. He is always studying in his spare time. He can read Latin and French as easily as I can English, and he is actually going in for art. He has copied several things in the Corcoran, and his ability astounds me."

"Who is he?"

"I know no more than you do. I took him on trust, and have been well rewarded."

"I wish every one in the department was as brave as he," said the doctor.

"So do I, but take them altogether they are as courageous a body of men as could be found anywhere."

"It is the truth, Coleman. But it is saying a good deal, and some might think you too proud of your brigade."

"No prouder than I ought to be."

A week had passed since the burning of the palatial residence of Bertram Llewellyn, and nothing had been heard of him at the N Street station.

Most likely he had forgotten the existence of such a man as John Lawrence. Not that Lawrence expected Mr. Llewellyn to call, but Superintendent Coleman did, and was disappointed, for he had formed a plan in his own mind for his protégé's advancement. He thought that he would interest Mr. Llewellyn, and perhaps through him get Lawrence into the Patent Office, or the Treasury, in both of which departments it was known that Llewellyn had considerable influence.

But the opportunity did not come, and John Lawrence remained a good member of the fire-brigade.

It was a few minutes after midnight when the alarm of fire was raised, and the men were notified that a tenement-house near the navy-yard was on fire.

The engines were soon ready, and they rattled along the streets, making the people along the route wake from their slumbers and look out of their windows to see the brave men pass.

Lawrence had entirely recovered from the effects of the Llewellyn fire, and was as ready and willing as ever to fight the flames.

The house which was on fire was as full of human beings as a hive is of bees.

The firemen broke through the basement windows and found themselves in several inches of water and filth.

The heavy rains had flooded the cellars and basements, and the people, utterly regardless of health, had dumped much of their garbage there.

The heat from the fire caused a most horrible stench, which nearly suffocated the firemen.

The fire was blazing brightly, and all was confusion and commotion.

The firemen could not keep back the crowd which had gathered, and it was not until the arrival of a squad of police that the engines could get fairly to work.

The people of the next house wanted to throw their furniture and things out of the windows, and it was with difficulty that the superintendent could prevent them from so doing.

One old lady, occupying a house three doors away, was frantically throwing everything portable from her second-story window.

A small, nickel alarm-clock struck a fireman on the head, and disabled him.

Pictures, books, vases, crockery-ware—all were thrown out in rapid succession; for what reason no one could tell, for they were all destroyed by the time they reached the street.

The old woman's example was contagious, and others began to imitate her.

The firemen were retarded in their work, and Lawrence was commissioned to stop her.

He rushed up the stairs, and saw the woman, busy collecting everything ready to throw from the window.

"Fireman, save them!" she cried. "Come, help me to throw them out, or they will all be burned."

"You must be mad! Save yourself—never mind those things!" said Lawrence.

"I must save them. Oh, help me—help me!"

"Your house is quite safe, ma'am. You can go back to bed; the fire will not reach you."

"You want to murder me—I know you do!"



She seized a carving-knife, and, in the madness of frenzy, rushed at the young fireman.

He had just time to dodge a blow, which stood a good chance of being fatal had it reached him.

The fire had deprived her of reason.

Lawrence saw that she must be overpowered.

He tried to clasp her in his arms, but she was as lithe as an acrobat, and as agile as a professional wrestler.

After many failures, he managed to pin her to the wall and wrest the knife from her hand.

Raising her in his arms, he carried her to the street.

She kicked and scratched, and tried to bite him, but he handed her over to the police, who hurried her away in an ambulance.

Lawrence and Eggleston were in the midst of the flames, trying to rescue the inmates of the burning house.

Several had been carried out, many of them quite frantic through fear and dread.

"Come along, Eggleston," cried Lawrence; "there are more in there yet."

They rushed up the burning stairway to the top of the house.

Here they found a woman and two children.

Lawrence caught up the children, one under each arm, and made for the stairs.

He had just reached the top, when, with a crash, they fell, leaving him standing on the brink of the yawning chasm.

The flames burst out with redoubled fury, and the children's night-clothes caught fire.

He rolled them on the floor, and caught up a blanket in which he wrapped them.

He made for the window.

To jump down would mean death for all three.

The ladders had not been raised.

What should he do?

There was but one chance.

He held the two children—little bits of tots they were—under one arm, while he climbed out of the window and stood on the sill.

He could just reach the gutter of the roof.

He must climb up to that.

But with the children in his arms it seemed an absolute impossibility.

"Drop them, Lawrence. We will catch them," shouted Cary.

Two firemen held a mattress beneath the window, and one of the little ones fell upon it and was rescued unhurt, but the other one screamed so much and was so frightened that she clung to Lawrence, endangering his life as well as her own.

But she was only four years old, and knew no better.

"Keep still, sissy," he said, "and we will get down."

"Don't 'ee frow me down, den," she said, in her infantile speech.

"No. You shall stay with me if you will be good."

"Me is dood."

She clung around his neck while he clutched the gutter firmly.

Slowly he raised himself up to the roof.

The people below held their breath.

It was a weird sight.

The night was horribly dark, but the figures stood out in bold relief, on account of the fierce light of the blazing house.

The roof was reached, but the flames burst through the shingles at the same moment.

The hissing, sputtering stream of water as it fell upon the flames, sent up a volume of steam which was almost worse than the fire itself.

Lawrence crawled along the gutter to the next house, and on still farther.

Then he lowered himself into the top-floor window, and left the little tot on the bed.

He went back the same way he had come.

Crawling along the roof, it looked as though each moment he must fall and be maimed for life, if not killed.

But fortune favored him, and he reentered the room from which he had taken the children.

He fancied he heard some one moaning.

He called aloud, but there was no answer.

He groped his way through the rooms, and reached a little ladder, which went up into a small attic room.

Up the ladder he went, and saw to his horror a man huddled up in the corner, evidently drunk.

The room was so low that he could not stand upright.

He reached forward and took hold of the man's leg.

That roused the drunken fellow, who began kicking and cursing.

"Come along, the house is on fire," said Lawrence.

"Who cares! Leave me alone, can't you?"

But the fireman pulled and dragged until he had got the man to the top of the ladder.

The drunkard, who fancied that his liberty was being interfered with, roused himself to a kneeling-position, and struck out at the fireman.

"Come along, or I shall leave you to burn."

The man laughed deliriously.

Lawrence tried to grasp him round the waist, but the drunkard, who was suffering from delirium tremens, laughed loudly.

"Catch Jim Cairns, if you can!"

Lawrence had heard of the pugilist, and was horror struck to find him in such a condition.

He balanced himself on the ladder, and again reached for Cairns.

The madman caught sight of the small hatchet at Lawrence's belt.

With sagacious cunning he pretended to allow himself to be held.

But he drew the hatchet and raised it threateningly over Lawrence's head.

The ax descended, but at that moment the support of the ladder was burned away, and Cairns and the fireman were both plunged into the horrible abyss of fire which raged beneath them.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BIRTHDAY-RECEPTION.

The mansion occupied by Wilson Vernon in New York was brilliantly lighted from roof to basement.

From early evening carriages had been stopping in front of the door, and fair dames and beautiful demoiselles had, like a vision of fairy-land, crossed the sidewalk, under a canopy, and into the house, where they were heartily welcomed.

In the large parlors, at one end, stood Gladys Vernon, looking radiant and lovely.

The reception and party was in her honor, for it was the anniversary of her natal day.

There was a settled look of sadness on her face, which gave her a little older appearance than was warranted by the number of anniversaries she had celebrated.

In her heart of hearts she was grieving for her favorite brother.

When, two years before, he had been driven from home, she had been very near the portals of the grave. She suffered far more than any one knew, and her grief resulted in a very severe attack of brain-fever.

Nothing seemed to rouse her, and when, the following year, her father took her to Europe and showed her the glories of the old world, he hoped the change would dispel her sorrow.

But wherever she went, her one thought was of her brother.



In the somber grandeur of Westminster Abbey, or the brilliant magnificence of the Tuilleries, by the banks of the Rhine, where castles still frowned as they had done from the depths of mountain-forests for a thousand years, or amid the awful solemnity of the snow-clad Alps, she still was the same.

"How much I should enjoy it all, if he were but here."

That was the burden of her soul, uttered sometimes, but thought all the time.

His face as she had last seen it, haunted her and spoiled all her pleasure.

One day her father handed her a letter from New York. It was from his business-partner, Mackenzie.

She did not understand all it said about prices current, charter-parties, and other technicalities of business, and she was about to hand it back when her eyes saw a "postscript."

Now, in a lady's letter the postscript is often the most important part, but in a business-letter where was its necessity? Still, with a woman's curiosity, she must read those few lines.

Mackenzie did not write very legibly, and it took her some little time to decipher the postscript.

When she succeeded, she read it over and over again.

Then her eyes became unusually red and hot, her heart beat a lively tattoo in her bosom, and her limbs trembled so that she felt it safer to sit down.

As she almost fell on the lounge, the letter dropped from her hand.

There it lay on the carpet, in that conventional hotel parlor, the postscript uppermost.

How the words seemed to burn into her very soul; for look at them she must, even though they gave her such real grief.

And what she read—reread and read again—was as follows:

"I have just heard that your scapegrace son, Lawrence, after roaming about the country, working at anything he could get to do, made for Florida, just in time to catch the yellow-fever. He was buried a few days ago. I feel sorry for the young man. Perhaps we were too hard on him; I forgive him, now that he is dead. So must you."

Gladys handed the letter to her father when he returned.

"Is that true?" she asked him, pointing to the postscript.

"I suppose so. Why should it not be true?"

"And he died without your forgiveness?"

"He never asked for it."

"Because he was innocent."

"It may be very nice for you, Gladys, to persist in saying so, but the facts prove his guilt, and he confessed. Now the boy is dead, let the matter rest."

It was a cruel thing to say, but Wilson Vernon was hard-hearted where his own son was concerned.

Gladys wrote to Mr. Mackenzie, unknown to her father, and pleaded with him for particulars, but all the reply she received was—that a former employee had been in Florida, and had volunteered as a nurse.

When he said he was from New York, a fellow-nurse told him that it was a pity he had not been a day earlier, for there was a young New Yorker who wanted his father's forgiveness for some wrong done, but had died without being able to give his name or address.

The nurse went to see him, and recognized Lawrence Vernon.

That was all, but it certainly appeared to be explicit and accurate.

So it came about that Gladys mourned for her brother, and a settled look of sadness remained upon her face.

But she was young, and after a few months she began to feel greater interest in life, and though the shadow was still there, she was bright and happy.

It was with feelings of joyous thankfulness that Wilson

Vernon saw the change, and on her seventeenth birthday he celebrated the event by giving one of the most magnificent receptions of the season.

The rooms were crowded, but every one felt at home.

There was nothing stiff or formal about the reception, for Mr. Vernon had learned that the art of entertaining is to allow every one to seemingly follow their own desires.

Among the late arrivals was Egbert Somers, a young Washington millionaire.

He had met Gladys two or three times, and her image had in some way got indelibly imprinted on his heart.

Egbert Somers was somewhat of a dude, but he was, after all, a genuine, warm-hearted fellow, worthy of all the respect given to him.

He soon found his way to the side of Gladys, and she, leaning on his arm, walked through the rooms, bowing to her friends, and receiving congratulations on every side.

"Who was that bronze-faced man who spoke so loudly to you just now?" asked Egbert.

"You mean Clinton Noble? Did you not know him? Why, he is one of the greatest heroes of the day."

"Indeed; and what has Clinton Noble done to win such praise from your ruby lips?"

There was a sneer, hardly disguised, in Egbert's words, for he saw that Noble looked with eyes filled with love on the fair hostess, and he was just a wee bit jealous.

"He was only a boy when our war broke out, but he enlisted and served with honor, and since then he has fought under I don't know how many flags."

"And you call him a great hero?"

"The world does."

"And the world is often wrong. I saw a true hero the other day, egad! But I don't think the world will rave about him."

"Tell me, who is he, and what has he done?"

"He is only a fireman."

"Oh!"

"Miss Vernon, excuse me, but that very exclamation tells me that the world sees no heroes save those who fight on the battlefield; and yet my hero is greater than all."

"You are enthusiastic, Mr. Somers. Will you not tell me of your hero?"

A pretty little group of palms sheltered two chairs, which were vacant, and Egbert suggested that they could be occupied.

It was a delightful retreat, and Egbert said that the palms carried his mind back to Florida.

"Have you been to Florida?" asked Gladys earnestly.

"Yes, and it is a delightful place at Christmas-time; but the fever—"

"I lost a brother there a year ago," said Gladys sadly. "But pardon me, I want to hear about your hero."

Somehow there did not seem much to tell, after all.

Perhaps Egbert was thinking, not of the fireman hero, but rather of the beautiful girl whose face was so near his own.

"It was in a very poor district in Washington, and the cry of fire meant much. Not that property was so very valuable there, but lives were, and the people were crowded together like bees in a hive—a family in nearly every room."

"Poor things!"

"You may well say so, Miss Vernon, for they are to be pitied. The house was soon one mass of fire and flame. It seemed that it would be impossible to save any of the inmates, so rapidly did the fire spread."

"My hero dashed up the ladder, and brought down men, women, and children, for he ascended several times. His hair was nearly all burned off, and his clothes were so scorched that it was a miracle they held together."

"Again he went up and was lost to sight. Suddenly, a cry from the crowd directed attention to the fireman and another man—a poor wretch suffering from delirium tremens—standing on the top of the stairs. The man was



mad, and struggled to get away; then there was a crash, and we saw both fall headlong into the sea of fire.

"It was horrible! My heart stood still. A few minutes, and we saw the fireman crawling on his hands and knees through the fire and into the open air. He was dragging the victim of intemperance after him. What cheering there was! The fireman handed the half-mad drunkard over to the police, and tried to reenter the building, but he was faint and exhausted.

"He seized a hose and let the water play on his face and body for a moment. At the upper window a child was seen. No one dare go up to try and save it. The verdict was that it must die the most horrible death. There seemed nothing against which a ladder could rest. But my hero pushed a ladder up to the wall, and though his captain called on him to come down, he went up and up, the ladder swaying all the time, and every instant we expected to see it fall.

"The child was reached, and the descent commenced. When half-way down the wall caved in.

"The ladder fell forward into the fire. The child clung to the fireman, who held to a piece of burning timber and swung twenty feet above our heads, with no foothold, and only a burning beam to cling to.

"The fire was close to his hands; the flames burned away his coat-sleeve and wrapped around his arm; we could hear the flesh crackling, we saw the agony on his face; but he held the child fast, and when a ladder was placed against the beam, a sturdy fireman had great difficulty in pulling my hero away from the blazing wood.

"But at last all were rescued. The child was badly burned, and the fireman will carry the marks of his struggle with the flames to the grave."

"He was a brave man."

"Yes, a braver man I never saw, but that was not all. The child was an orphan, and its sole protector was the drunken pugilist.

"John Lawrence—the fireman, you know—said he would look after the child, and he is paying for it in the hospital to-day; he is also a patient there."

"He is a true hero. What did you say was his name?"

"John Lawrence."

"My brother's name was Lawrence, and I never hear the name but my thoughts go back to him. Dear old Larry!"

Egbert Somers sympathized with her sorrow for her brother, and by his eloquent eulogy of the fireman's bravery he had enlisted her sympathy, and furthered his own cause, for he hoped, one day, to call her wife.

"You have another brother, have you not?" asked Egbert later in the evening when he was again by the side of Gladys.

"Yes, Bryce, but he is in Washington, and could not get leave of absence."

"Your brother in Washington?"

"Yes, he is in the Treasury."

Gladys answered without any warmth, and Egbert thought that she had not the same love for the living as for the dead brother.

"I must find him; I shall enjoy the acquaintance of any one who is proud to call you sister."

Gladys did not like to say "don't," but all the same she hoped sincerely that Egbert would not get an introduction to Bryce, for, alas! she often had to blush as she thought of him.

He was not any better than he had been, and many a time her father had to pay large sums of money to clear his son from some unpleasant escapade.

"My brother does not go into society," she ventured to say, "so I fancy you will not find him companionable."

A partner came to claim her for a dance, and thus interrupted the conversation about her brother.

"Vernon, old fellow, you look as young as ever," exclaimed Senator Vorst, as he tapped his old-time friend on the shoulder.

"I feel pretty much as young, Vorst, but your white hair makes you look older than you are."

"Thanks for the compliment; but, say, is it true that you are going to run for Congress?"

"I have been slated, but—"

"It is just the thing for you. You ought to be in Congress, and then think of your daughter; she would make a brilliant match in a year. You would see her sailing away with some titled European—"

"I hope not, Vorst; I am an American, and have no desire that Gladys should ever change her nationality."

"You will accept the nomination?"

"I do not know yet. The truth is, it is not the man they want, but the money."

"Great Scott! you are not getting miserly, are you? What assessment do they ask?"

"It is a strange district. Nominated by the machine and indorsed by the counties, I am sure of election, but I would have to give my entire two years' salary as assessment."

"Well, that is nothing to you."

"No, the money is not, but the principle is wrong. Have you seen anything of Bryce lately?"

"I was hoping that you would not ask me that question."

"The truth, Vorst? What is he doing?"

"I cannot say. I—"

"You have bad news? Tell me; put an end to my suspense. What is the new scandal?"

"You will have to know, so perhaps it is best to learn the truth. I got him into the Treasury Department, and, great Scott! I was sent for yesterday. Bryce has got a warning that he must be more attentive to his duties—"

"Is that all?"

"No, alas! he has got into a scrape in 'the division.'"

"What shall I do with him?"

"Pray for his death," answered the senator bluntly. "Living he will go to the dogs; dead—well, your name will not be disgraced. I speak plainly, for it is best."

"What should I do if I were in Congress?"

"You could look after him a little. Think over it, for your own sake, as well as his."

Vorst had an unwilling listener.

Behind a large palm stood Egbert Somers; he had unconsciously listened to the opening sentences, and could not emerge from his secluded position without betraying the fact that he had heard, and that would be painful to all parties, so he remained where he was until the two men moved away.

"Poor Gladys! So her brother is a reprobate! Poor girl! no wonder she speaks so coldly about him."

And Egbert Somers was more in love with Gladys Vernon than ever.

But Egbert was destined to hear considerable more before the evening was over.

Harry Pabst, a warm friend of his, who knew the Capital City, as well as he did Berlin—and that was saying a great deal, for Pabst had lived ten years in the Prussian capital—put out his hand to grasp Egbert's.

"Well, chappie, I can't go anywhere without bumping up against you."

"We do meet pretty often, and that's a fact, but not often twice in the same place."

"No, I met you in the Unter den Linden first, then in the Bois de Boulogne. I ran against you in Westminster Abbey, saw you in the Capitol at Washington and now of all places, meet you here. How did you get to know the Vernons?"

"Thereby hangs a tale, chappie. I'm here on a delicate mission."

"Oh!"

"Yes; by the way, do you know Bryce?"

"What Bryce?" asked Egbert.

"Vernon, of course."

"No."



"Good thing, too. Fact is that he got into a bit of a snarl at Quong Wah's the other evening. I promised to help him out in his trouble with the heathen Chinese, and here I am."

"What is the amount?"

"Three hundred——"

"Say nothing to Vernon about it, Pabst, there's a good fellow. I'll stand the loss."

"You?"

"Hush, I'm good for that amount. When do you go back?"

"In the morning."

"I'll go with you. I want an introduction to Bryce Vernon. Don't tell him anything about the money. Let him think that——"

"I see; but, chappie, what's in the wind?"

"Nothing. Only a philanthropic fad of mine; don't tell any one a word."

"No."

"There's a good fellow. Let me introduce you to Miss Vernon."

"I have had that honor. Splendid girl, isn't she?"

The gaiety was kept up until early-morning, and every one felt that Gladys Vernon would have every reason to remember her birthday-reception until the end of her life.

Next day Harry Pabst and Egbert Somers occupied chairs in a parlor-car, bound for the city of magnificent distances—Washington the superb.

And while they were smoking their cigars and talking about as many different subjects as there are weeks in a year, Gladys Vernon was writing in her diary—which was the recipient of her most secret thoughts—that on all the earth there could not be a nicer man than Egbert Somers.

## CHAPTER V.

### LITTLE IDA.

In a comfortable but plainly furnished room in F Street, Washington, on a cot-bed, with snow-white sheets and counterpane, lay a little girl whose years could not have numbered more than six.

Her forehead was bandaged tightly, while another compress was on her left cheek; one arm was lying outside the counterpane, and that, too, was wrapped in linen bandages.

She was not pretty, scarcely interesting, though when anything pleased her a light flashed from her eyes which showed that within her little body was a soul which was capable of higher flights and better things.

Acquaintance with sorrow and privation had made her older than her years, and she had lost all the pleasing prattle of baby-talk, and spoke more like a street-gamin of fifteen.

There was a natural refinement about her, however, which seemed entirely foreign to the surroundings in which she had been found.

Every few minutes her little eyes would be raised, furtively looking toward the door, as though she expected some one.

By the bedside was a little table, and on it an orange and a glass of lemonade.

She was a little uneasy about something, and she took a sip of the cooling beverage; but it did not satisfy her. Then she took the orange, and after turning it around two or three times in her one uninjured hand, she let it fall, and it rolled off the bed to the floor.

That seemed to amuse her, for she laughed, and had there been another orange she would have thrown it after the first.

She took up the glass, and was in doubt whether to use it as a ball or not, but better thoughts prevailed, and she set it down again on the table.

There were footsteps on the stairs, and her face brightened considerably.

Her eyes turned toward the door, but the steps continued and she was disappointed.

"Won't he come and see me?" she said, almost petulantly; and as though in answer to her question, the door was opened softly, and a gentle question asked:

"Are you awake?"

"Yes, uncle."

The door opened wider, and Fireman John Lawrence entered.

He was clad in ordinary citizens' clothes, and looked even more manly than he did in his uniform.

A white bandage crossed his face, and his right arm was in a sling.

"How do you feel to-day, Ida?" he asked very gently.

"Tired; so tired!" she answered.

"Did you not sleep well last night?"

"Yes, I sleep and sleep, and then I wake, but I am so tired."

"That is funny. Perhaps you sleep too much," he said laughingly. "Wait a bit, and we will be able to go out for a drive. But wouldn't the people stare at two cripples such as we are?"

She smiled, but did not answer. Instead, she asked another question.

"How is Uncle Jim?"

"I think he is a little better. Can you talk to me a little?"

"In course."

"Say of course; it sounds better. I want to find out all about you. What is your name?"

"Ida; didn't you know?"

"Yes, but you have some other name."

"Have I?"

"Certainly. You know my name is John, but it is Lawrence, as well."

"But you are a big man, while I am only a little girl."

"When you were a little weeny-teeny baby you had two names."

"Lawk, who told you? Has Uncle Jim been talking about me?"

"No, Ida. But all babies have two names, some get three, and I have read of a princess who had twelve names."

"And when she was out playing, making mud-pies, and sich like, did they call out all her names when they wanted her to come in?"

Lawrence smiled at the idea. It was too absurd. It was impossible to think of a princess sitting on the ground under a tree and making mud-pies.

But good-hearted Lawrence told Ida some stories he had read about princes and princesses, and the child was delighted.

"Are princes fairies?" she asked.

"No, dear, only children and afterward men, like other people."

"Oh!"

"Then you do not know your other name?"

"No; ask Uncle Jim, perhaps he has it, unless he has lost it, and he would lose his head if it wasn't screwed on tight."

"How long have you lived with—Mr. Cairns?"

"Jim?"

"Yes."

"Ever since I was so high," measuring about two feet from the ground.

"And your mother, do you remember her?"

"No."

"Nor your father?"

"No, I don't think I ever had any."

"No father?" asked Lawrence, thinking of the famous Topsy, who "spect she growed."

"No father nor mother—as I never heerd of any."

"Say heard, not heerd. Was Uncle Cairns kind to you?"



"Yes, he just loved me awful much when he warn't drinking."

"And then?"

"Well, he spanked and walloped me all the time, but I didn't mind, why, 'cause I knew he'd be sorry for it arterward."

"I shall take care of you now."

"And will you spank me when you get drunk?" she asked, in childish innocence.

"I never do get drunk."

"What? Never?"

"No, Ida, and I hope I never shall."

"Thought as how all men got drunk sometimes; ain't it so?"

"No. There are thousands, hundreds of thousands, who never get drunk."

"Lawks, how funny!"

The fireman spent a long time with his little charge, and told her stories the like of which she had never heard.

He talked so kindly and gently that she was soothed, and when he had finished she turned her little head on the pillow and fell asleep.

There was a peaceful smile on her face, and she looked happier than she had done ever before.

"I must try and find out who she is," mused Lawrence, as he left the room.

"Ah, Mrs. Reynolds, you take good care of your little patient. I wonder if you would look after me as well if I lived here."

"I wish you did, Mr. Lawrence, but then there is nothing here good enough for such a great hero. The good Lord bless you, sir."

"Thanks, Mrs. Reynolds, but as I have told you before, you overrate what I have done. What do you think of Ida?"

"She won't trouble you long, sir."

"You think——"

"She is going home. If ever I saw death's mark on any little one—and I've buried five of my own, sir—it is on her."

"You don't think so? Doctor Johnson——"

"Doctors are very good in their way, but there are little things they haven't time to see. I don't blame them, but they can't be all the time with their patients."

"You alarm me. I want Ida to live."

"Of course, but don't grieve your heart should she go. It might be best for her——"

"It might; we cannot see the future."

With heavy heart John Lawrence walked away, and as he turned the corner into Pennsylvania Avenue he was stopped by Egbert Somers.

"Pardon me, sir, but is not your name Lawrence?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are a fireman?"

"That is my profession."

"I thought I was not deceived. May I have the honor of shaking your hand?"

"Honor?"

"Yes, it is a great honor. I was at the fire when you rescued that child, and I voted you to be a great hero at once. I shall be proud to shake your hand."

Lawrence was almost overcome with nervous emotion.

"If ever I can be of service to you I shall be the proudest man in Washington. Don't hesitate to call on me. That address will always find me."

He handed Lawrence a card as he spoke, and resumed his journey, prouder than if he had been in conversation with the President. John Lawrence looked at the card and read:

"Egbert Somers, No. — Vermont Avenue, Washington, D. C."

"That is the name of a good man," said the fireman, as he looked at the card. "I would like to know him—but,

there, I am only a fireman, while he—— Of course the thing is impossible."

And the great gulf made by society yawned between the millionaire and the fireman.

The latter realized it, and went to his boarding-house, not unhappy, but wondering why money should make so much difference, and why the intelligent, honest poor man should not be the equal of the rich and honest man.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ITALIAN FURY.

Fireman Eggleston was not a hard-hearted man. He was altogether too brave to be harsh or cruel, but he did utter what sounded very like an impious wish when the alarm was sounded and he knew there was a fire in Purdy's Court.

Eggleston did not like Italians, although he knew that the Washington representatives of that ancient and glorious people were a peaceable and quiet set of men and women.

But the alarm was sounded, the engine was brought out, and Eggleston was not going to try and shirk his duty.

The fire was in a house occupied entirely by Italians.

The lower floor was a kind of warehouse. Green bananas and ripe ones were piled up on the floor, and fruits of various kinds stood about in baskets.

The fruit did not look tempting.

The floor was filthy. It is a matter of grave doubt whether it had ever been swept since the house was built.

The combined odor of decayed bananas and the dirt was far from pleasant to the olfactory nerves of the visitor.

"You spoila my bananeys," said a man, who looked blacker than the most terrible member of the Mafia.

"Get away; I must take the hose through there," said the fireman.

"I not geta away. I staya here."

Eggleston, seeing the defiance of the Italian, stepped forward, and, placing his hands on his shoulder, said kindly:

"Come away, or we cannot save the house."

"Taka your hands away; I no leta you spoila my fruit."

The fireman did not stop to argue, but using a little gentle force, dragged the man away from the warehouse.

A bright blade flashed in the lamplight, and Eggleston had scarcely time to escape from the blow of a stiletto.

He handed the Italian over to a policeman and again went to work with his men.

But quite a number of Italians thought that Andrea had been assaulted by the fireman, and they stood ready to have their revenge.

All their warm southern blood was at fever-heat, and only a little was needed to turn them into most dangerous enemies.

"You sava my wifa," said a man to Eggleston.

"Where is she?"

The banana-seller pointed to the second story.

"She is there. Sava her for mea."

The ladder was reared against the window.

Eggleston himself ascended.

He burst open the window, which seemed to have been nailed down.

The black smoke almost suffocated him.

He threw himself on the floor and crawled along.

The room was empty. He went into the next, where the flames had already followed the smoke, but still no sign of any woman.

He crawled back to the window.

The fresh air revived him a little.

"There is no one in these rooms," he shouted.

"He killa my wifa. Killa him!"

The angry Italian threw a stone at the fireman; but a dozen men closed around the infuriated man, and prevented him doing any more mischief.



"Where is your wife? I did not see her," said Eggleston calmly.

"You killa her. My wifa is there," pointing to the third-floor window, instead of the second.

Eggleston, regardless of all danger, ran up the ladder to the window.

It was almost impossible to find a place strong enough to bear its weight, but the brave fireman risked his life a second time to save the Italian's wife.

He reached the window, and a terrific outburst of flame met him.

It was as sudden as if it had emanated from an explosion. Eggleston stooped down on the ladder, to enable him to breathe.

Again he was level with the window, and the black smoke hid him from view.

"He is lost," cried the people.

"A brave man killed to save an Italian woman," sneered a tall man who hated the Italians with almost passionate fervor.

But Eggleston was still safe.

He could find no woman there, and with sorrowful heart descended the ladder.

The Italians burst through the line of firemen, and surrounded him.

They were mad with excitement and frenzy.

"Where is she?" they asked.

"I could not find her."

"You killa her. You hata my people," said the bereaved husband.

"Man, I would save a dog from such a death," retorted Eggleston.

"He calla my wifa a dog. Kill him."

A dozen stilettos flashed in the air, but just then John Lawrence, his one arm in a sling, stepped into the midst.

"Put up your knives. I'll kill the first man who touches Eggleston."

And when the Italians saw that Lawrence had a heavy bulldog revolver in his hand, they fell back.

But as they did so another lot of infuriated men came up, and before Lawrence had time to turn, the revolver was knocked from his hand.

The firemen were fighting the flames, the police were protecting the rescued property, and our hero was left standing unarmed in the midst of a crowd of Italians whose warm blood had been worked up to boiling heat over a fancied wrong.

The position was critical, but he would not call out for help.

He stood calm and dignified, the sharp stilettos threateningly near.

"Are you men? Do you not see that we are trying to save your property?" he asked.

"My wifa!"

"You should have saved her yourself," answered Lawrence.

The speech was unfortunate, for it still further excited the people, and the fireman every minute expected to feel the touch of the sharp steel.

Yet he did not tremble.

He was keeping the men away from the fire, and by diverting the attention of the Italians he was giving his brigade a better chance to fight the flames.

His life was in danger, but he was still doing his duty.

The courage displayed by Fireman Lawrence was a stronger weapon than his revolver.

The Italians looked at him, and admired his cool manner.

Impetuous, as all Italians are, their passion was soon spent, and every one of them felt sorry that they had threatened the fireman.

One, a well-known banana-merchant, who was supposed

to be the chief of the Mafia in Washington, picked up the revolver, and handed it to Lawrence.

"You dida your duty; me lika you," he said, and the fireman accepted the compliment and apology.

"Is your wife really in the house?" he asked of the man who had caused the tumult.

"I thinka so."

"I searched every room, Mr. Lawrence," said Eggleston, "and could not find any one."

"You killa her. You no lika Italians!" muttered the man, who was still angry.

Eggleston was not as cool as Lawrence, and he angrily retorted:

"Perhaps you murdered her yourself, and then set the house on fire!"

It was a very unwise thing to say, even if the fireman thought it.

The Italian was all excitement again, and drew a sharp stiletto.

Before he had time to use it, a policeman seized his wrist, and quickly put on the bracelets.

"You are wanted," he said, and, seeing how excited the other Italians were, the policeman, a good-hearted fellow, explained to them:

"You know me. I never wronged one of you. But Andrea here has been accused, and I am compelled to arrest him."

Eggleston thought that the officer of the law referred to his hasty speech, and said he had no basis for his charge.

"Then it was a mighty strange stray shot, for the man's wife accuses him of locking her in a room just before the fire broke out."

"It's falsa! I dida not fire the place."

"I never said you did, but you will have to come with me now."

His compatriots looked black, and some of the Americans thought that they were going to attempt a rescue; but, to the surprise of all, one of their number spoke up and told the policeman he was doing right.

"It is men like Andrea who make us disliked," he said, and both Italians and Americans cheered the sentiment.

The fire was under control, some of the engines had left, and the others were preparing to follow.

John Lawrence was walking away when Egbert Somers accosted him.

"I do think, Lawrence, that you are the greatest hero in the city to-day."

"Mr. Somers, I accepted your friendship because it is pleasant to sometimes rise above one's surroundings and catch a brief glimpse of another world, but if there is to be any friendship between us there must be no more flattery."

"My dear fellow, you are oversensitive. It was not intended for flattery. Why were you here to-day? You were on the sick-list, and yet you take part here, and by your tact avert a riot, and perhaps save several lives. But which way are you going?"

"I am going home."

"May I walk with you?"

"It will be a pleasure to me."

"Then our gratification will be mutual. Do you know, I have an idea that I should like to see you in some department—say the Treasury—"

"Ha! ha! ha! A fireman a clerk in a government office! The thing is too absurd. Every one would laugh—"

"Did they laugh at the country lawyer who had once been a rail-splitter, and yet, as President, saved the republic? Did they laugh at the tailor who could not write his name when he was eligible to vote, but who became President when Lincoln was murdered?"

"But, really, I have no wish to be anything else but a fireman."

"Did not your ears tingle the other night—let me see, Monday?"



"Why?"

"Because a lovely young lady was talking about you in New York."

"About me? and in New York?" asked John Lawrence, in amazement.

"Yes; I was telling some of the deeds of heroism I had witnessed, and Miss Vernon——"

"Whom did you say?"

"Miss Vernon—Miss Gladys; it was her birthday—— Why, what is the matter? Are you sick?"

"A slight faintness, that is all. I have overexerted myself a little. Do you know Miss Vernon?"

"Why, yes. I was a guest at her father's house. She is one of the nicest girls I ever met, and, to be candid, I hope some day——"

"Let me congratulate you!" exclaimed John Lawrence warmly.

"It is too soon for congratulation; I may not—that is, I am not worthy of her."

"Yes you are. You——"

"My dear fellow, do not excite yourself. One would think you knew Gladys—Miss Vernon."

"I knew some people of that name once, but that was long ago. Has the lady any brothers?"

"One."

Lawrence sighed.

"Oh! Is he a nice fellow?"

"Nothing like his sister. He is in Washington."

"In Washington?"

"How strange you seem! My dear fellow, you are positively ill. Come in and have some oysters, for I am a great believer in food for nervous prostration."

"No, I would rather not."

"Come, now, I enjoy oysters at night, and I would like to have company. Here we are at Harvey's. What say you to half a peck of steamed?"

The far-famed restaurant was entered, and the fireman found himself on an equality with senators and congressmen, heads of departments, and others who assembled there.

Lawrence could not resist mentioning the Vernons again.

"I think you said Miss Vernon had only one brother."

"Yes; Bryce, they call him. She had another, but, poor fellow, he fell a victim to yellow jack in Florida."

"Did he? How she must have grieved!"

"It nearly killed her. But you are not eating—I shall have to insist on you seeing a doctor."

"I am all right. Let the fire-alarm sound, and you would find me, like the old war-horse, ready for action."

After an hour spent in Harvey's, the two young men left, and as they did so they brushed against Bryce Vernon, who, however, was so nearly intoxicated that he did not notice Somers, and it was not likely he would know a fireman.

When the two separated John Lawrence had fully made up his mind to send in his resignation, and leave the city.

A sudden and unaccountable feeling had come over him that Washington was not the place for him.

But the old saying, which the French have made so cosmopolitan, "*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*," was true in his case, as in many others.

He had become very uneasy, and instead of walking the nearest way home he turned into Pennsylvania Avenue, and watched the people as they hurried along on their way from the theaters.

He was unusually interested in the crowd which poured from the National Theater.

The youth and beauty of the capital had been well represented that night.

There were senators, and their wives and daughters, and most of the social celebrities.

The crowd grew thinner, and many of the theater lights were put out, when a young lady, clad in the prettiest of

evening dresses, with an opera-cloak of pink silk, trimmed with swan's-down, stood on the steps, alone.

"Where is Mr. Llewellyn's carriage?" she asked one of the ushers.

"Cannot say, miss; must have gone, for there is no carriage in sight."

John Lawrence saw and recognized her. She was the Angela of his dreams, the guest of the Llewellyns, whom he had rescued from the fire.

He stepped up to her.

"Miss Winan, the carriage left several minutes ago. May I not call one for you?"

He spoke so calmly that she felt herself safe in accepting the offer, and in a few minutes a coach was at the door.

He opened the door, and she took her seat.

His hand was on the handle to close the door, when she, with charming impetuosity, said:

"Have I not seen you before? Are you not the brave fireman who saved my life? I am not, cannot be mistaken, for you were pointed out to me by Mr. Somers."

"Yes, Miss Winan, I am a fireman, and I was at the fire which destroyed Mr. Llewellyn's house."

"I thought so. I am so glad I have seen you, so glad to have an opportunity to thank you."

"Please, Miss Winan, do not talk of thanks. I only did my duty."

"That is what uncle says, but I know it is modesty on your part; I am sure you are a great hero."

She had placed her hand on his, and he could not withdraw his without appearing rude.

With a charming piquancy, she suddenly asked him:

"You think the coachman will take me to the house where uncle is staying?"

"I will show him. I will ride on the box."

"No, no, I could not think of that——"

"But it will be better."

"Then you must ride inside with me."

There was some further discussion, but it ended with Lawrence riding in the coach with Angela, and being the happiest man in the whole of the District of Columbia.

When he at length reached home, a letter from Superintendent Coleman awaited him, and on breaking the seal he found that it was a communication announcing his promotion.

He was now foreman of the N Street station.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BACCARAT.

An excited group of men sat around a table in a large room on the second floor of a fine house in a fashionable locality, about a month after the events recorded in our last chapter.

They were engaged in that most exciting of all games of chance—baccarat.

What a study their faces presented.

Nearly all of them were hardened gamblers, two or three still bore on their faces the last lingering look of innocence.

"Abandon hope all ye who enter here," Dante declares is written over the gates of the Inferno, and it would be just as applicable if inscribed over every gambling-hell.

At the head of the table sat Colonel Medlicott, a Southern ex-soldier, a man who had distinguished himself on the field, and had been specially complimented by General Robert E. Lee; next to him sat another soldier, one who had worn the blue on the field of strife.

But neither looked like soldiers: their eyes were sharp, it is true, but it was with an unnatural brilliancy caused by champagne. A young man nearly opposite the banker sighed as he rose from the table, a loser.



He had ventured everything he possessed, and had lost. He was on the verge of ruin.

Only a narrow line divided him from crime.

"What, going, Herbert? Why, man, the fickle goddess is bound to favor you if you are not faint-hearted. Try another chance."

"No, Medlicott, I have lost all."

"The more reason why you should try once more. I'll lend you a fiver."

The young man hesitated.

The older one saw the hesitation, and pressed him more closely.

The loan was accepted, and Herbert won.

"What did I tell you? Come, you are in fortune's favor now."

Again Herbert won.

His eyes grew brighter, his manner more excited.

A sudden ambition seized him.

He would break the bank.

He would carry everything before him, and then—

He would never touch a card again.

Such was his resolve.

He played desperately.

The higher the stake the better he liked it.

The chips—representing a large sum of money—lay before him.

He gloated over them as a miser does his gold.

Again the cards were dealt, and again Herbert won.

But he evinced no desire to quit.

The passion was holding him bound in fetters strong.

The door was opened.

No one looked up for a few seconds, for none could gain admittance there unless he was in the secret.

"Hello, Vernon, just in time!" exclaimed Colonel Medlicott.

"Playing high?" asked Vernon.

"No, only a little pastime. Herbert has nearly broken the bank."

"Ha, ha, ha! Baby Herbert break the bank—that is a good joke!" sneered Bryce Vernon.

"Take a hand, Vernon?"

"Of course."

The cards were dealt, and the game progressed steadily.

The bank was losing.

Medlicott suddenly paused.

"This is dry work. I never knew it so dry. Waiter, some Piper Heidseck."

"Bully for you, Medlicott!" shouted young Pearson, who had lost rather heavily.

Bryce Vernon began to lose; in fact, all lost after the champagne had been passed around.

The bank was winning everything.

The rake brought in gold and notes and I O U's with startling rapidity.

Herbert was cleaned out, so was Pearson, and Bryce Vernon had given his note for fifty dollars more than he could pay.

A sudden thought caused Vernon to spring to his feet.

"I'm a Jonah, that's it. Now, play, you fellows, and I'll watch."

He stood to the right of Banker Medlicott's chair.

The cards were dealt, and the players won back some little.

A second time the luck was against the bank.

The players became excited.

They played for higher stakes.

Some ventured more than they could pay.

Luck turned again.

The bank was winning once more.

Medlicott began to deal.

Two cards had left his hand when Bryce Vernon suddenly leaned over, and pinioned Medlicott's hands to the table.

"What unseasonable joke is this?" asked Herbert.

"You shall answer to me, sir," cried the banker excitedly.

"Answer to a cheat? Yes, certainly."

"You call me a cheat?"

"Gentlemen, come and judge for yourselves," said Vernon, with scarcely suppressed passion. "I suspected cheating, and I rose from the table. Medlicott ordered champagne. I knew he meant you should pay for it, but how? I have found out."

"It is an insult!" cried the Northern soldier.

"Pleading the baby-act," sneered another.

"No, gentlemen, I can lose without crying, or win without going mad, but I leave it to you. Here, Leicester, deal some cards—see, as Medlicott did, just there."

"Great Jupiter! I can see every spot."

"You try, Herbert."

"Malediction, I see it all."

Medlicott had managed to spill a little of the champagne on the leather-covered table. As he dealt, the liquid acted as a mirror, and the dealer could see every spot on the cards. It was a clear case of cheating.

Vernon loosed his hold on Medlicott's hands, and the next instant a pistol-shot rang through the air.

The banker had fired at his exposé.

The bullet went wide of its mark, but all knew that an alarm would be raised, and the police would enter.

Instantly the lights were turned out, and a general rush was made for the stairs.

Medlicott had seized Bryce Vernon, and the two rolled over under the card-table.

They struggled fiercely for a few minutes in the dark before they realized their danger.

Vernon was the first to get on his feet.

In doing so he upset a large lamp which stood in the corner of the room, and which was only used as an adjunct to the gas.

The kerosene-oil ran over the carpet, saturating the lace curtains, and being absorbed by the richly upholstered furniture.

"How can I get out of this confounded place?" exclaimed Medlicott, who was thoroughly bewildered.

He struck a match, but, as ill luck would have it, the head broke off as it ignited, and in a second the room was one mass of flame.

It was a veritable sea of fire.

From floor to ceiling the flames leaped, fed by the kerosene.

Vernon rushed to the window looking out on the main avenue, and opened it.

The breeze fanned the flames, and increased their intensity.

Both men were bewildered.

They rushed frantically about, driven back and forth by the flames.

Bryce Vernon was the first to leave the room.

He rushed up-stairs, and forced his way through the scuttle to the roof.

Medlicott tried to follow him; but was afraid of the flames.

He went to the window.

A crowd had gathered.

"Jump!" they cried; but he was too much alarmed to do so.

He stood on the window-sill and staggered like a drunken man.

It was a mystery how he ever managed to keep his feet.

The hook and ladder company had arrived, and a ladder was raised to the window.

Medlicott, in his haste to descend, let go his hold on the window, and overbalanced himself, falling into the blazing building.

Foreman Lawrence arrived with his engine.

"Man inside," said one of the spectators.

Eggleston took a branch and entered the building to play upon the first floor, while one of the ladder company,



with splendid heroism, dashed through the window to rescue Medlicott.

The house blazed so rapidly that it was impossible to save it.

The firemen directed their energies to the adjoining houses. Two servant-girls had managed, in their fright, to reach the roof of the next house. They stood in the gutter, crying hysterically that they were falling.

"Stoop down!" shouted Lawrence.

"I dare not. I shall fall—I know I shall!" responded one.

Four men got a large counterpane, and held it so that, if they fell, the fall might be broken.

"Jump."

"I dare not."

"We will catch you."

One of the girls looked down to see how great the distance really was.

She became dizzy and fell.

Turning several far from graceful somersaults, she landed in the counterpane, and gasped out:

"Oh! I thought I should fall."

It was impossible to resist laughing.

The other girl was on her knees. She was shrieking and crying for help.

"Shall I go up, sir?" asked Bangs.

"No, Bangs, it is not safe," answered Foreman Lawrence.

But no sooner had the answer been given than the foreman entered the house and ascended the stairs.

He reached the roof, and suddenly clasped the frightened girl around the waist.

She was in instant danger of falling, and Lawrence knew it was her only chance.

He dragged her along to the scuttle.

She struggled, cried, kicked, and screamed, but Lawrence took no notice.

"How dare you touch me?" she cried.

But her voice was choked with a tremendous rush of smoke.

Lawrence threw her to the floor, falling down beside her.

He dragged her along, and in her anger she bit and scratched him, but he would not relinquish his hold.

The smoke was awful, and Lawrence knew that if a door or window should be opened the smoke would give place to flame.

The very thing he dreaded happened.

The door was on fire, and a panel fell out; there was a big rush of flame, which seemed to encircle everything in its embrace.

Slipping off his coat, he wrapped it around the girl's head, and half-dragged her along.

He looked from the window.

The engines were at work playing on the flames in the next house.

There was no time to wait for a ladder.

He looked down, and saw his task was a difficult one.

His only chance was to drop to the window beneath him, from which he could get to the porch roof.

Had he been alone, he would not have hesitated a moment.

But the girl was unconscious, and therefore a dead weight. It must be done.

He hesitated just a moment, and then, with a prayer on his lips, he dropped.

How well he had calculated!

His feet struck the sill, and at the same moment his disengaged hand had grasped the hot framework of the window.

He was cheered by the crowd, but a groan mingled with the cheering, for no one could imagine how he was going to save himself and the girl.

"Catch her!" he cried.

A dozen willing hands were held out, and he gently dropped his unconscious burden.

He saw she was safe, and began to study how he could escape.

The window-frame was so hot that he could not continue to hold it.

To leap to the porch roof was more hazardous than he imagined.

It was his only chance, and, crouching as low as he could, he sprang forward.

His feet struck the roof, but slipped from it.

Fortunately, he was prepared for such an emergency, and his fingers closed over the tin gutter.

He swung there for a minute, to regain his breath, and then dropped to the ground.

"Are you hurt, foreman?"

"No, sir."

"It is providential."

"Yes. I am shaken, but that is all. Heaven is very kind to me."

It was feared that the whole block would fall before the great enemy.

Three houses were but ruined shells, and a fourth was beginning to show signs of the devastating influence.

The alarm had been sent to all the stations, and the whole city was thoroughly roused.

Never before had the department showed greater proficiency, and out of the hundred and thirty officers and men, over a hundred were on duty at the fire.

Suddenly, a cry was raised by the foreman of Truck B:

"A man!"

"See! up there on the roof!"

"He must be saved!" cried the chief engineer. "Who will volunteer?"

Every man was ready, but before any order could be given John Lawrence had put things in motion for the difficult task.

The man was standing on the roof waving his arms frantically.

His brain was evidently bewildered, even if his reason was not entirely gone.

Sometimes he appeared as though he was about to jump, at others he tore his hair, and leaped about with frenzied madness.

Fortunately, the roof was a flat one, or he would have lost his life long ere he was noticed.

The ladders were run up, and John Lawrence ascended; but just when he was within reach of the roof a sudden squall of wind blew flame and smoke into his face with such suffocating force that he had to descend a dozen feet to recover his breath.

He grasped his hatchet, and with some well-directed, vigorous blows smashed in the window of the fourth story.

He leaped into the smoke and flame, and crawled on his hands and knees to the ladder by which the scuttle was reached.

It was gone.

The frenzied man had drawn it up after him.

What was to be done?

Lawrence shouted to the man to drop through the scuttle.

The man laughed hysterically, but took no further notice.

It was impossible to reach the roof that way, and Lawrence had to climb again through the window and try to reach from the outside.

The great difficulty was a projecting cornice, which, while it looked from the street to be the strongest of stone-coping, was the frailest and thinnest of zinc.

It would scarcely bear the weight of the ladder, but Lawrence ran up another length, and it rested against the cornice.

He was about to mount it when the madman seized it and tried to push it away.

"You fool! Don't you want to live?" shouted Lawrence.



Eggleston had reached the roof of the next house, which was a story lower.

He had the branch hose in his hand.

Seeing the difficulty, his ready wit caused him to turn the stream of water on the madman.

The water hissed and spluttered.

A big column of steam arose from the hot roof.

The water made the task even more difficult.

One can stand a dry heat, but to be parboiled with steam is more than human nature can endure.

"Stop!" shouted Lawrence.

But as soon as the hose ceased to play, the madman commenced his diabolical work of pushing the ladder away.

Clegg, of the North Carolina Avenue engine house, reached Eggleston's side, with a rope having a strong hook attached to it.

With splendid dexterity he threw the hook to the roof above.

It caught in the cornice.

"Hold it firm, Eggleston, and I'll go up."

But Clegg's weight pulled down a large piece of the zinc cornice, which fell with a sickening crash close to Eggleston's feet.

The flames ascended higher.

The sky was brilliantly illuminated.

All Washington lay like a panorama before the gaze of the people who had mounted to the roofs of the near-by houses.

Right away across the Long Bridge, Jackson City could be seen; Georgetown and the Naval Observatory stood out prominently in the glare of the firelight.

The big Capitol looked magnificently grand on its hill, and the Statue of Liberty never appeared more beautiful or imposing.

It was a fire to be remembered by every one who saw it, a fire whose record would live in the history of the city, and be talked of in hundreds of thousands of homes on the morrow, when the telegraphic news was read at the breakfast-table.

Fireman Clegg was no laggard in flame-fighting. As a boy he had stood under the stars and stripes in the Wilderness, and never had he flinched when the bullets fell around him like hailstones; and now, in the prime of his manhood, he showed the same heroic characteristics.

He knew no fear, he recognized no defeat.

He saw the cornice crash on the roof beside him, and he muttered:

"Thank Heaven! That sham has helped us by falling."

He released the hook, and with as true an aim as ever cowboy threw lasso, the hook was on the higher roof and clinging to the stonework.

Amid the intense cheering of the crowd Clegg climbed the rope and was within a few inches of the top.

A groan long and loud burst from the crowd below, for they saw that the madman was quietly but surely grappling with the hook to release it, and send his would-be rescuer into a premature grave.

The nervous but strong fingers were on the hook, when a man—who had not been noticed by the crowd—sprang forward and pinioned the madman, and thus frustrated his attempt at murder.

It was Foreman Lawrence who had performed the act, and the cheers of the crowd drowned all the noise of the engines and hissing of the steam and roar of the flames.

"Lawrence forever!"

"Bully for him!"

"Great Scott! but Lawrence is a fine fellow."

The people shouted.

They yelled themselves hoarse.

They were deeply excited.

The two calmest men in all that crowd were the firemen, Lawrence and Clegg.

They knew the work was not yet done.

The man had to be lowered to the ground, and the flames had burst through the roof on which they stood, making a column of flame and smoke higher than the dome of the Capitol, and higher even than the Washington Monument.

Lawrence whispered to Clegg. At least it seemed to the crowd that he did so, but in reality he had to shout, the roaring of the flames was so loud and strong.

The people watched breathlessly.

What were the firemen about to do?

Clegg descended the rope and reached the lower roof.

The heat was getting intense; the walls blistered his hands when he touched them. His clothes were almost like tinder.

"All right!" he shouted.

Lawrence released the hook from the wall, and pulled up the rope.

He tied one end tightly around the madman's body; then he lifted the struggling, smoke-blackened man over the wall, and gently lowered him to Clegg, who was awaiting him.

The fireman grasped the rope, and again shouted:

"All right!"

Lawrence fastened the hook firmly in the wall.

Clegg pulled at it, to test its security, and Lawrence swung himself free from the roof, and descended to the place where his fellow-fireman was awaiting him.

It did not take many minutes, not half as long as it has done to describe it, but in those few minutes one of the grandest feats of heroism was performed.

Eggleston and Cary and Bangs were ready now to help, and the man who had been made frenzied by the fire was carried to the street.

Lawrence and Clegg were the heroes of the hour, but they modestly went on with their work of fighting the fire-demon.

It was not until after midnight that the fire was under control.

Most of the engines had gone home, and the truck companies returned to their houses.

A cry, heartrending and terrible, told the story that in all probability some were buried beneath the ruins.

On the morrow the work of excavating and searching must be commenced.

Then it was that Lawrence asked after the poor maniac.

"He is in the hospital, and the doctors say he is only suffering from acute mania; he will be all right in a week or so."

"Thank Heaven! Does any one know his name?"

"Yes, he is Bryce Vernon, a clerk in the Treasury Department—Eh, what's the matter, Lawrence? Poor chap, no wonder he has fainted, for Foreman Lawrence has done the work of a dozen men this night."

And the firemen carried the unconscious foreman away from the heat of the fire, and bathed his face and rubbed his hands with as great tenderness as any woman.

For hours he remained oblivious to his surroundings, only occasionally he would mutter:

"Bryce Vernon! Bryce Vernon, and I saved him!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CRY FROM THE RUINS.

On the morning succeeding the great fire the men were at work excavating the ruins on the suspicion that some person might be buried beneath.

It was a most disagreeable work, and although the men engaged had been to a certain extent hardened by long practice, they acted as though some violent sickness was struggling for mastery over their nervous organism.

The picks were used very gingerly, for each man felt that at any moment he might strike the charred remains of a human being.

With willing hands the heavy timbers, burned and still burning, were hauled out.



Until every bit of brick and charred wood had been taken out of the ruins it would be impossible to say whether any one had really perished in the fire.

Superintendent Coleman watched the work, while the firemen from the N station were ready to play upon the debris should it get too hot for the men.

Every few minutes there would be a spurt of smoke, followed by a little flame, as some inflammable material came in contact with a spark from the smoldering wood.

"My daughter! oh, where is she? She must be dead—dead in there," shrieked a poor woman as she pushed her way through the crowd to the ruins.

"Your daughter, ma'am, did you say?" asked Coleman.

"Yes, she was a help in that house—the middle house, I mean, and—and—I have not seen her."

"What was her name?"

"Susy Long."

"Excuse me, ma'am, but it is duty, you know. Could you identify her—"

"Know my own daughter," she exclaimed indignantly.

"Of course I should—who better, I should like to know?"

"You misunderstand me, ma'am. Suppose—only suppose, you know, that her face was—well, covered up, how could you tell her?"

"I would uncover her face."

"Just so."

Coleman turned away. He had not the courage to suggest that the girl's face might be disfigured beyond recognition.

The woman was indignant, and to a neighbor who had accompanied her expressed her sentiments with very terse language, if not in the most polite manner.

"The man's a fool!" she said. "How could I tell Susy's face if her face was covered up?"

"Mrs. Long, you misunderstood—"

"Did I, then? Well, perhaps I haven't the education you have, but I know that two and two don't make five, so there."

"It is not that, Mrs. Long. The man meant, what if Susy's face was—was—burned so that it was all gone—eyes and nose and cheeks—"

Mrs. Potts was alone.

Mrs. Long had rushed after Mr. Coleman, and seized his shoulder with anything but a gentle touch.

"You've found her. Mrs. Potts says you have. Where is she? Is her right hand burned? I can swear to that hand anywhere."

"My dear madam, I have not seen Susy."

The superintendent walked away, his heart full of sympathy for the poor woman who believed that her daughter had perished in the flames.

A big crowd had gathered.

All around the fire-lines was a row of pallid faces, morbid and curious.

They did not know what they wanted.

They had not lost any relatives or friends who could by any possibility have been in the ruined buildings, and yet eyes stared until they were glazed and smarting.

Some were so far away that they could not see the workmen, but as the shovelfuls of bricks and ashes and charred wood were thrown up, they gasped and groaned until it was really painful.

The workmen continued their labor, while the perspiration poured from them.

The fire had spread so rapidly that the walls had fallen in and made a most difficult pile of debris to remove.

About eleven o'clock a lady, dressed in the very height of fashion, pushed her way through the crowd, and got close to the rope.

She was the cynosure of all eyes.

Who could she be?

The crowd forgot the ruins, forgot the workmen, and had no thought, no eyes, but for her.

She was fascinating, not beautiful. Hundreds of more beautiful girls could be found along Pennsylvania Avenue after four o'clock any day; but there was something in the toss of her head, in the flash of her eyes and her general appearance, which attracted attention. Then, her dress was far different to what one usually sees in such a crowd.

"Who is she?" asked scores of people, and all sorts of conjectures were made.

One young fellow, a man about town, who never missed the sights, whatever they might be—whether a brawl over in Jackson City or a reception at the White House, a row in Hell's Bottom between policy-playing negroes, or a swell ball at the Arlington—a man who knew everybody, or thought he did, which was just the same thing to the multitude—this young man screwed his glass into his right eye and looked at the beauty.

"By Jove!" he muttered.

"Who is she, sir?" asked a bystander.

"Don't you know? Why, she is old Senator Blank's young wife. She was a seamstress in his family, don't you know, and when the widower got tired of his loneliness, why, she became Mrs. Senator Blank. She is staying at the Arlington."

"But what is she doing here?"

"Ah! thereby hangs a tale, as Shakespeare or some other fellow said, don't you know. She was well acquainted with Colonel Medlicott, and he, with her husband, was a frequenter of the burned house."

"Thanks! Is the colonel there?" pointing to the ruins.

"Not much! Sad thing about young Vernon."

"Very."

"Good family, but he is not much. Father likely to be here as congressman next year."

And so the chatter continued, all regardless of the dread work going on in the cellar before them.

Suddenly, there was a hush.

It was weird in its very universality.

A faint cry had been heard from the ruins.

The news spread so quickly that it seemed as though all heard it at the same time.

The lady who had attracted so much attention looked as though she were about to faint.

A dozen men stepped forward, each ready to offer her protection and catch her in their arms, had she fainted.

A score of women poorly dressed, some showing unmistakable signs of poverty, were just as liable to faint, and perhaps with more cause, but no one rushed forward to assist them.

Youth and beauty, highly perfumed tailor-made dresses, and costly jewelry, will attract all the time, while far more honest and honorable women may take care of themselves.

It is the way of the world in Washington as well as New York, in the cultured city of Boston just as it is in the Quaker city of Philadelphia.

The buzz of conversation had ceased.

All were straining their ears to catch the sound, and yet every one trembled at the thought.

"Some one buried in the ruins," whispered a policeman.

"And alive," added another.

The cynic might have added:

"Yes, alive, or how could the cry be made?"

As though some one had said it, a woman answered:

"Do you remember the great fire at the Patent Office? Don't you remember how the ruins were haunted? Cries were heard every night until everything had been cleared away."

"Hush!"

The feeble cry was again heard.

"Hurry, men, but take care," ordered Foreman McGinnis, of the excavating-squad.

The men worked with a will.



The debris came up in shovelfuls quicker and faster than ever.

Great pieces of timber, flooring-joists, beams, pieces of studding, door-frames, or what was left of them, were lifted out of the great mass, and passed along from man to man until the place was reached where they were to be piled.

Again the cry was heard; it seemed fainter than before. "We will rescue you," said one of the men kindly; "don't exert yourself by crying out."

Again and again the people forgot the cry and the conversation was renewed, only to be stopped when a voice would suddenly cry out:

"Hush!"

Then the noise would cease.

Then the hearts of the people would beat faster, fearful that some mangled body would be raised from amid the ruins and sicken the sight.

But that thought did not deter any from looking.

Morbid curiosity held them in its strong thrall.

The cry—weaker than before—made poor Mrs. Long almost frantic.

"It is Susy's voice. I would know it anywhere," she cried, and the people crowded around her in sympathy.

"Poor woman!"

"It must be awful to lose any one like that."

Then the people grew silent once more.

Mrs. Long was inclined to be hysterical.

"Hurry! Susy is alive, don't you hear her cry? Save her, there's good people. What are you throwing that dirt about for? Why don't you save my Susy?"

The cry was heard again, and louder, a clear proof that the workmen were getting nearer to it.

A few more minutes, and the cry gave place to a loud and joyful miaow as a gray cat leaped out of its prison-house and scampered away, alternately crying like a child in distress, and miaowing with true catlike intelligence.

All had been deceived.

Mrs. Long had recognized the voice as that of her daughter, old firemen had been certain the voice was human, and the police were equally confident.

Yet, with all the positiveness, it was only a cat, which showed its gratitude by running away as fast as its four legs—cramped somewhat by the narrow prison-chamber—could carry it.

A reaction set in, and hearty laughter took the place of sighing and fears, and while some were dissatisfied because their morbid curiosity had not been gratified, others were glad that after all it was only a cat.

All day the men worked, and no sign of any human body was found.

In the early evening Foreman John Lawrence was able to go the ruins and see if any need existed for his engine to remain there.

He had gone around among the men, and had talked with Eggleston, who thought that there might be danger even then.

"I hear that there were some chemicals stored in the basement of the last house," he said, "and they might explode and cause the fire to break out again."

"We must stay then. But you had better go and get some rest. I will remain."

"Are you able, sir?"

"Sir! Whom are you addressing? In public perhaps it is necessary, but when we are alone, I am still John Lawrence, or Jack, to you, Eggleston."

"Thanks, sir—I mean, Mr. Lawrence."

"I tell you I don't want any mistering from you in private. Get away home; you need rest."

"And you?"

"I have had a good long rest, and feel refreshed. Go, send the other boys to relieve the men."

Lawrence was now in complete charge, and he made certain changes in the working of the excavators which added to their comfort.

"Always thinking of others, Mr. Lawrence," said Foreman McGinnis.

"I like all to work under the best conditions, that is all."

He relieved some of the men, and got others to pile up the furniture which had been rescued from the flames, so that it could be well guarded.

"Mr. Lawrence, sir."

"Yes, McGinnis."

"We've found something. What shall we do with it?"

McGinnis spoke in a whisper, and Lawrence knew full well that the news was saddening.

He went with the foreman into the deep abyss of the ruins, and saw a charred body of a young woman.

It was lying as it fell, straight and composed, a heavy timber across the body had kept the falling mass away from it, and death must have been instantaneous.

The clothes were all gone, nearly all the flesh was burned away, but the outline and the long, dark hair showed that it was the body of a woman.

Cautious as all were not to allow any of the public to know just then of the ghastly find, they did not succeed in keeping the knowledge from Mrs. Long.

The distracted woman pushed through the crowd, crawled under the rope which the firemen had placed around the ruins, and with dangerous precipitancy jumped into the cellar amid the smoldering debris.

"Susy, my Susy! What shall I do?"

"My dear woman, calm yourself. This may not be your daughter's body at all," said Foreman Lawrence.

"It is. I know it is. Susy, speak to me, speak to your own mother. You cannot! Oh, my poor child! Would that I were dead instead of you!"

"How can you recognize the body?"

"Those ear-rings, I bought them. They were a birthday-present, and, look, there is a ring on her finger. Didn't her own father give her that the year he died? Oh, sir, what shall I do?"

Lawrence tried to console her, but what words could calm the sorrow of such a woman—of such a kind, loving mother? The most he could do was to promise that the remains should be carefully handled and conveyed to her home.

And Lawrence, out of his own salary, paid for a plain, but good, casket for the poor charred body of the servant-girl who had perished so sadly.



It was nearly eight o'clock when Lawrence left the scene of the fire for his station.

On the very outskirts of the crowd which still lingered there, he saw a face which caused the warm blood to rush to his cheek.

For the very mention of Angela Winan's name was enough to start his heart off at "double quick."

"Mr. Lawrence!"

How sweet the name sounded when uttered by her lips.

He saluted, as he would a superior officer, and blushed as he saw her outstretched hand.

His own were dirty with smoke and ashes, but he forgot it for the moment, and took her proffered hand.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Winan," he said. "See how I have soiled your glove."

"I am so glad. I shall never wear that glove again."

"I should think not, and I have ruined it."

"Say, rather—made it more valuable, for I shall treasure it very much. But, Mr. Lawrence, have you heard how Mr. Vernon is?"

"He is improving rapidly."

"I am very glad. Was it not sad? How brave you are! I shall never know how to thank you. First you saved my life, and now Mr. Vernon's."

Lawrence felt his heart sink like a lump of lead.

A horrible suspicion that Bryce Vernon might have won Angela's heart made him most miserable.

"Do you know—Mr. Vernon?"

"Oh, yes, very well; and it is so sad for his sister."

"For his sister?" repeated Foreman Lawrence mechanically.

"Yes, poor, dear Gladys—that is, Miss Vernon, you know. She lost one brother in Florida last year."

"Did she?"

"Yes, poor fellow. She did love him so much. He was her favorite brother, and she was in Europe when she heard of his death."

"In Europe? I did not know——"

He paused. What right had he, a common fireman, to know aught of the doings of the wealthy family of Vernons?

"Yes, she was very sad, and her father took her to Europe. She is my dearest friend. She hopes to come and see me in the fall——"

"In St. Louis?"

"No, here. I am going to stay a whole year with cousin Flora."

"And is Glad—I mean Miss Vernon—coming to Washington?"

"Yes; and do you know, I shall bring her to see you!"

"No, please do not."

"I must. She can talk ever so much better than I can, and she will know how to thank you for saving her brother's life."

"Miss Winan, may I presume on your good heart to pardon me if I speak plainly?"

"There is nothing I should like better."

"Then I want to tell you that gratitude for my work is absurd——"

"Mr. Lawrence——"

"Please listen to me. I am a paid life and property-saver. It is my business, see? just as it is that man's business to sell oranges. I am employed by the commissioners of the district to save life, and——"

"I know all that, but you are so much braver——"

"No, no, Miss Winan, that is a statement I cannot allow to pass. Every man in the department is brave. God bless them! they are a noble set of fellows!"

"Indeed they are, but you——"

"I am foreman over some of the best of them all."

"I shall bring Mr. Vernon to see you, anyway; and you must like him—indeed you must——"

The warm-hearted girl suddenly thought that she had been too impulsive and free with a stranger.

Her face blushed, and maidenly bashfulness caused her to be silent.

But only for a moment.

"Mr. Lawrence!"

"Yes, Miss Winan."

"Have I offended you?"

"Offended me?"

"Please do not repeat. I—I would like an answer."

"You could not offend me, Miss Winan. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have talked to you as though I had known you for a long time."

"I am proud to think you have done so."

"It really seems that, as you saved my life, we could never again be strangers."

John Lawrence wanted to answer very differently to what he did.

In his heart he was thinking, "I would like us to be more than mere friends, for I love you, Angela!" but his mouth uttered the very commonplace words:

"I thank you, Miss Winan, but please remember that I have helped to rescue scores whose names I have never heard."

"And did they not seek you out?"

"No, indeed; some of them hate the very sight of a fireman."

"Why?"

"It reminds them of their great losses."

"How selfish."

Unconsciously, the fireman and the society young lady had walked a considerable distance.

It was the fireman who first noticed it, and suggested that Angela should take a carriage home, as the hour was getting late.

She blushed as she thanked him, and as she wished him good night, she said:

"You must know Gladys Vernon. You will like her. She is so different—so much better than her brother."

An alarm of fire prevented him from thinking much about Miss Winan that night, for he was kept very busy.

The fire was in the most crowded part of Bloodfield, and the negroes were of the very lowest type.

In fact, it was almost a pity to put out the fire, for if the rookery had been burned the negroes would have been scattered, and the evil diminished.



All night Lawrence was at the scene of the fire, for although the flames were not allowed to spread, the negroes were so ignorant of danger that it was feared they might do something which would cause the fire to break out again.

It seemed that Lawrence's cup of sorrow was to be filled to the brim.

His mind was worried because of Angela.

He loved her, but he knew there was a great gulf fixed between them; and his only safety was in flight.

What if she loved Bryce Vernon?

Could he, even if he were her equal, expect to win her from such a rival?

She spoke kindly, and even warmly, but that was only gratitude.

How presumptuous it was for him to dare to think of her in any other way than that she was grateful for his having saved her life!

With his mind worried and troubled over his love for Angela, he returned home, intending to resign from his position, go somewhere else, and begin life anew.

The next day he entered the B. and O. depot, and took a ticket for Jacksonville.

He would try the sunny South.

He wished to find out something about his own death, to find out if any one had been masquerading under his name, and if so, whether he was honorable, or the reverse.

It would be strange to inquire about his own fatal illness and decease, and there would be a weird charm about such an investigation.

The thought of it dispelled for a time his gloom, and for a few hours he was in a dream.

He was going to a new country, and to a new life.

How small a thing will sometimes change a life!

Some little event, the missing of a train, the delay of a boat, a sudden indisposition may change the whole of a man's career.

It is related that Charles the First of England sought to prevent the persecuted Protestants leaving his kingdom, and only succeeded in stopping one man, who, rather sluggish in his disposition, had overslept himself, and in hurrying to the boat which was to convey himself and friends to the New World of America, was arrested and detained by "mandate of the king."

"So much the worse for the king," answered the rugged Puritan.

And much cause had the king for remembering that little act, for the man whom he detained in England was Oliver Cromwell, who a few years later overthrew the monarchy, and ordered the execution of the king.

John Lawrence intended leaving the train at Jacksonville, but when near there a fellow passenger fainted, and our hero, having no particular business to detain him, volunteered to accompany him to St. Augustine.

"Jacksonville can wait. I am dead and buried long ago," he said, "so time is of no particular moment."

Hence, instead of the busy seaport he found himself in the sleepy old town where Ponce de Leon planted the standard of the cross, and which was the first city built by white people in the New World.

Lawrence was charmed with the quaint old town, half-Spanish, half-American.

Its old-fashioned houses, the hoary ramparts of the ancient fort, the Moorish cathedral, the crumbling city-gates, the narrow streets, and the dark-eyed descendants of old Spanish cavaliers whose ancestry can be traced back with pride, all appealed to the soul of our hero.

He was more than interested.

He was enchanted beyond the power of words to explain.

Up and down the streets he wandered after seeing his short-time friend to his home—looking at everything and admiring all.

He walked along St. George Street to the city-gate, which once formed parts of the old stone wall, which, running from shore to shore—protected the city from hostile incursions.

The sentry-boxes, scooped out of the solid wall, were there still, exactly as when the last guard stepped from them in answer to the bugle-call, when the sun had set and the sentry was relieved.

Then, as the evening was pleasant, he wandered out to Fort Marion.

He passed through dusky passages, rambled up and down crumbling stone stairs, crossed the barbican, passed through worm-eaten oaken doors, and emerged upon the grassy, battlemented slopes of the old fortification, and looked out across the bay over the Island of Anastasia to the sea beyond.

His soul was elated with the view, though memory brought back to him the fact which history records, that the fort was built by prisoners of war, and that the laying of every stone was the cause of blood being shed.

He thought of the dungeons where pirates and Indians had been imprisoned, and farther back when the cruel inquisition killed men for a difference of belief.

It was getting late when he returned to the city, and he hesitated which hotel he would honor with his presence.

The Ponce de Leon, that palatial hotel, alike the wonder and envy of the world, had not then been built, and so he selected the Magnolia, which stood in the center of St. George Street.

Wearied out, he scarcely tasted his supper, though it was delicious and well served. He soon betook himself to his room.

He could not realize where he was; he still fancied himself in the Capital City, and visions of Angela and his friends passed before his mind.

When he sank to slumber he did not know, it came gradually and without warning.

But he slept soundly until a most unearthly sound awakened him.

It was almost like the sound of a monster cracked gong.

Louder and still louder it sounded, and he leaped out of bed, and rushed to the window.

Others were astir as well as he, and he soon knew that it was the fire-bell which was disturbing the people, and making them leave their comfortable beds.

All his fireman's ardor was aroused, and he dressed ha-



stily, rushing into the street, while the people were yelling frantically:

"Fire! Fire!"

Every one knew it, and yet every one shouted.

The old-fashioned engines and pumps were dragged through the streets, and even the volunteer firemen added to the row and uproar by yelling:

"Fire! Fire! Clear the way! Fire! Fire!"

All the fireman's instinct was aroused in Lawrence.

The cry of fire was a call to work.

He did not hesitate.

He never once thought that it was no business of his, that he was only a visitor in the city.

Not once did he imagine that his offers of assistance would be declined.

He dressed and rushed into the street.

Hundreds of others had done the same thing.

There was no mistaking his earnestness.

The fire was in St. Francis Street, and the flames had made considerable progress before the pumps arrived.

They were old-fashioned hand-pumps, and Lawrence smiled as he saw the difference between the method used in the quaint old Southern city and in Washington.

But there was the same heroism, the same undaunted valor there as in the larger cities.

The men worked with energy and zeal, but the means at their disposal were very limited.

Unknown to himself, John Lawrence had brought away with him his fireman's badge.

He was stepping to the front rank, intending to offer his services, when he found himself rudely jostled and pushed about.

"Get back there, can't you?" shouted one indignant volunteer.

"Get a move on yer," added another, not quite so choice in his expressions.

But as they jostled Lawrence his coat became unbuttoned, and his fireman's badge showed up conspicuously.

"Why couldn't you say you were one of us?"

"You did not give me time."

"Where from, comrade?"

"Washington."

"D. C.?"

"Yes. Let me help you."

"Green blazes! but I should think you can help. Boys, here's a regular bang-up paid fireman come from Washington to help us; give him the command, say I."

"No, friends, I will do what I can as a volunteer."

A sudden spurt of flame recalled them to a sense of their duty, and they rushed hither and thither, all desirous of doing good work, but entirely without discipline or real knowledge of what to do first.

"Give me a branch," said Lawrence. "I will climb to the roof and catch the flame there."

The man spoken to opened his mouth very wide, and seemed aghast at the idea of any one trusting himself on one of those frail roofs.

But Lawrence got the branch, and mounted the ladder.

The cornice of the house was burning, and the ladder tottering.

But higher and higher he climbed, until he stood on the gutter of the house, and directed the hose where he wanted the water.

"Let her go!" he shouted, intending that the pumpers should send up a stream of water through his branch.

But he was misunderstood.

A man—brave, doubtless, as any—was standing on the ladder, and pointing his branch at Lawrence.

Instantly, a big stream of water was turned on, and John Lawrence was thrown over.

He had lost his balance, and, like a log, started to roll down the roof.

The people below expected to see him dashed to pieces on the street.

They closed their eyes and waited.

But he did not fall.

Just as he was plunging over the edge of the roof he caught the rain-leader, and, clutching it with both hands, held on for dear life.

Then a ladder was run up, and he was saved.

But Lawrence did not descend; he saw how important it was to throw the water on the roof, and he again mounted the slippery shingles.

The people cheered him, and wondered at his bravery.

"An' it's second nature to him," drawled out one of the amateur firemen. "He was born to it."

How little they knew that his term as a fireman had been a very short one.

The fire was got under control, but a few sparks had been blown across over the housetops, and alighted on a dry, inflammable roof.

Scarcely had one fire been subdued before the column of flame arose from a larger house near-by.

The engines were run around the block and a new fight commenced.

"There is some one in the house!" shouted a bystander.

"Where?"

"I saw a woman in white at the window up there."

"Is there one in there?" asked one of the firemen, addressing the owner of the house.

"No, I think not. Let me see. Mary, Alice—where is Miss Winan?"

"Who did you say, sir?" asked Lawrence excitedly, for the mention of that name had sent a strange thrill through his breast.

"Miss Winan, sir; she is my daughter's guest——"

"Is she in that house?"

"I—don't—know. Here, Mary, where are you? Alice, where is your friend?"

"I—have not seen her, papa. I thought you——"

"You had no business to think, you ought to have made sure."

Godfrey Anstruther, whose daughter Angela was visiting, was all excitement. He raved like a madman, for all had forgotten their lovely guest.

"Run up a ladder to that window," said Lawrence.

"What for, sir? If there's any one there, they'll have to stay."

"Do as I say!"



"Great Willikens! No one could enter that room."

"Will you run up that ladder?"

The man saw that Lawrence was in earnest, and he soon had a ladder placed against the third-floor window. But it had scarcely got into that position before Lawrence had seized a fireman's ax, and was half-way up the ladder.

He smashed in the window-frame, and a hot blast of smoke and flame met him, and almost stifled him.

He was too accustomed to such a rebuff to mind it much.

He had held his breath, and so did not inhale much of the smoke.

Leaping through the window he found the smoke so dense that he was compelled to crawl on his hands and knees.

He called out, but there was no answer.

The smoke nearly blinded him, but he groped his way along. There was no one on that floor, so he descended to the next.

He searched the bedrooms, but no one could be found.

The flames lapped around him, encircling him in an embrace of death, but he fought them off, and, covering his face and head with a blanket he had snatched from a bed, he groped along to the last flight of stairs.

But there was nothing but a shaftway; the flames had devoured the stairs, and Lawrence nearly fell headlong to the hall below.

But as he drew the blanket a little more from his face, he saw a heap of something lying near the hall window.

Could it be a human being?

Yes, for he distinctly saw a little bare foot peeping out from the charred clothes.

He forgot all caution, and threw off the blanket.

He stooped down amid all the smoke and steam, and tried to raise the body.

It was a girl's body he saw there, black with smoke and dirt. Clad only in a wrapper, which she had hastily put on, she had no protection from the fire.

As he touched her the wrapper, scorched and singed, fell into dust.

He threw the blanket around her, and lifted her in his arms.

Then a cry—startling and terrible—broke from him, for he recognized in the scorched and blackened girl his Angela.

"Oh, Heaven! if she is dead, I will die too. I dare not live without her. Life would be a curse, death a blessing."

He did not utter these words, he only thought them, for he was holding his breath, and fighting his way up-stairs to the window by which he had entered.

The ladder had been moved.

As he stood by the window again, he could scarcely make himself heard.

His voice had almost left him, for his lungs were full of smoke.

"Ladder!" he shouted, and at last some one saw him, and saw also that he clasped something in his arms.

The suspense was terrible.

He knew that in a few minutes the floor would give way beneath him, and a fiery death awaited them.

If he were sure Angela was dead he would not have hesitated.

He knew that suffocation would destroy all sense of pain, and it would be almost happiness to die clasping the loved form of Angela in his arms.

He could not help thinking how strange it was that he should have journeyed to Florida, and should have changed his plans, so that he might again rescue Angela from the flames.

He thought he felt her heart beat.

Joy, if it were so!

Yes, she opened her eyes, and looked into his face, then closed them again, and fell back in his arms.

The ladder was in position.

He would not relinquish Angela, but held her fast with his left arm while he steadied himself with his right.

How the people cheered as he descended!

But he knew not that they did.

He held a precious burden in his arms, and was not going to relinquish it.

He dashed through the crowd, and ran like a madman to the Magnolia Hotel.

With his foot he pushed open the door, and rushed up-stairs, never pausing until he had laid the unconscious girl on his own bed.

The hotel people, roused by the fire, had prepared several rooms in case they were needed.

The proprietor saw Lawrence rush up-stairs, and he followed.

On the bed lay Angela Winans, wrapped in a smoke-blackened blanket, and on the floor, equally unconscious, lay John Lawrence.

"This is a pretty pickle. Send for a doctor," said the hotel-keeper, as he saw the two unconscious ones.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DOCTORS DIFFER.

Angela Winan had had her way.

She wanted change, and told her father she must leave Washington.

Lawrence's departure had so thoroughly upset her nerves that life in the Capital City was unbearable.

She had fully made up her mind that she would never see the handsome, brave fireman again.

Life would be drear and blank without him, but Angela was made of too true metal to give way under even such a loss.

To her, life was a duty, a mission, and though she might have to bear a heavy cross, she must live for her father's sake.

Hence, she had persuaded him to take her to Florida.

At Jacksonville she met Mary Anstruther, an old school friend.

The meeting was a surprise to both, for they had not seen each other for two years, and had drifted apart.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Mary; "but isn't it dreadful?" she added, with all the inconsistency of speech to which the feminine sex is addicted.



"Lovely, yet dreadful—what is?"

"Lovely to meet you, but we leave here in two days."

"Leave. Are you going North?"

"No; we have a house in St. Augustine; papa stays there all winter."

Papa Anstruther was duly introduced, and extended an invitation to Mr. and Angela Winan.

"Do, papa, accept," urged Angela.

"My dear, I want to transact some business now I am here, but you can go."

And so it was arranged that Angela was to accompany Mary Anstruther to St. Augustine for a week, when Mr. Winan would join her, and accompany her on a tour down the Indian River.

It was Angela's last night but one at St. Augustine when the fire took place, and she was so strangely rescued from the burning house by the man she had never expected to see again.

Mary and Alice Anstruther had been too much excited and panic-stricken by the fire to even think of their guest.

They had never been in danger before, and they were quite upset.

As for the father, he was easy-going, and left his daughters to look after their guest, while he attended to his wife.

And between them Angela was forgotten.

In trying to make her escape she had been partially asphyxiated and had fallen down in the hallway, just where Lawrence had found her.

Doctor Conquerro, a descendant in direct line of one of Ponce de Leon's comrades, was reckoned the most skilful physician in St. Augustine; perhaps that was because for a score of generations the Conquerros had lived in the city, and during all that time there had not been a year when one of the family did not practise the art of Æsculapius.

The doctor looked wiser than he really was.

But the appearance of wisdom goes a long way sometimes.

Doctor Conquerro was the first doctor reached by the hotel-messenger, and as he entered the room he looked first at the prostrate fireman.

"He can wait," was the curt remark he made, as he saw the regular breathing of the fireman.

Then he approached the bed.

Throwing the blanket back, he saw the blackened skin of the lovely girl.

He placed his hand over her heart.

"Umph!"

He felt her pulse, and looked very wise.

"Umph!" he muttered again.

Turning to the chambermaid, he said:

"Better get some one to wash off the smoke; she will look better. Who is she? Does any one know?"

"Stranger staying with the Anstruthers."

"Oh!"

"Will she live?" asked the hotel-keeper.

The doctor sniffed mysteriously, rubbed his eyes, and then, in what sounded an almost heartless voice, he declared that she was dead.

He ordered Lawrence to be carried into another room,

and gentle hands began to wash off the black smoke from the beautifully formed body of the millionaire's daughter.

"She is not dead," said Bridget McGee, the chambermaid, as she applied the sponge to the girl's face.

"The doctor says she is."

"He is a regular old woman. If Doctor Pat Donovan could only see her—but then he would fall in love with her, he does with all the pretty girls. Sure, I hear his voice now."

"Annywan here wanting me?" he asked, with the most delicious brogue.

Bridget had not the slightest Irish accent, although born in Dublin town, while Doctor Donovan, who was a native of Florida, inherited a brogue which was a treat to hear.

"Yes, doctor, it is yourself as can do some good," answered Bridget.

"By St. Pathrick! what a beauty! Sure, a gossoon would not have to kiss the Blarney Sthone to tell her he loved the ground her pretty feet stepped upon. Think of that now!"

"Now you have got rid of your blarney, doctor, just professionally tell me, is she alive?"

"Alive, is it? Sure, an' does annywan purtend to say she isn't?"

"Doctor Conquerro——"

"An old woman."

"Says——"

"Never mind what he says; sure and I'll have her walking down-sthairs, the tips av her little fingers resting aisy on me arm, so I will."

"Can I help you, doctor?"

"Can ye, Bridget? well, I should say ye can. Go and get some clothes for the purty colleen, for I'm afther thinking that she would scarcely loike to walk down-sthairs in this rig," pointing to a blanket, which constituted Angela's only covering.

When Bridget returned with a regular feminine outfit, Angela was breathing regularly, and a soft flush was suffusing itself over her cheeks.

"I'll lave ye whilst you put the lovely cr'ature on the inside av those clothes."

And suiting the action to the word, the broad-spoken doctor left the room, and encountered his brother professional.

"Been looking at the corpse?" asked Doctor Conquerro.

"Divil a bit, but I've been looking at a lovely colleen who is getting dressed at this minute."

"But she is dead."

"No, she isn't."

"But I say—nay, here is the certificate of her death——"

"Give that to me, Conquerro, and as the lady's name is not there, she shall fill it in herself. Think of that, now!"

The two doctors went down-stairs together, and Conquerro was greatly surprised when he became convinced that Angela was really alive.

It was several days before she was able to leave the room, but before that time she had asked for and seen her father, who had been sent for.

"Papa! Is it not strange that I should be in another fire, and a second time while visiting?"



"It is a very strange thing, indeed."

"Papa, I had such a dream—so strange!"

"Did you, my dear?"

"Yes, I thought that once I opened my eyes, and saw—who do you think?—Mr. Lawrence."

"Perhaps you did."

"I did dream it, really."

"It may not have been a dream."

"What do you mean, papa?"

"My dear, you have often said that truth is stranger than fiction; I think it has been so in your case."

"To what do you refer, papa?"

"To what you have said."

"My dream?"

"It was not a dream. Mr. Lawrence did rescue you a second time."

"I do not understand. This is Florida——"

"Yes, and we are not the only ones who came from Washington to St. Augustine; fortunately, Mr. Lawrence did."

"Papa, how strange it is! I can scarcely believe it."

"It is true, though."

For a few moments Angela closed her eyes, as though to sleep, but from her lips there came a murmur of praise, and her father heard the words of the well-known hymn:

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform."

## CHAPTER X.

### LIGHT AHEAD.

It was evening, and as pleasant an evening as was ever seen in the Southern Newport, as St. Augustine has been called.

The air was balmy and mild, and hundreds of promenaders were to be found on the beach.

Here and there a young couple might be found walking on the sea-wall, but as it is only two feet wide, it became necessary for one arm to steal around the lady's waist, to keep her from falling off.

Down on the sands, slowly walking along, were John Lawrence and Angela Winan.

They were walking, like children, hand in hand.

They were silent; perhaps they were listening to the plash, plash of the waves, or it may be they found sweet music in the zephyr breeze which blew from the shore and wafted to them, with the rustling of leaves, the sweet fragrance of orange-blossoms. A sigh relieved the monotony, and was answered by another sigh from the masculine breast.

For some time Angela had been trying to break the silence, but somehow her lips would not utter the words her mind was framing.

At last she stammered out:

"Why did you leave Washington, Mr. Lawrence?"

Instead of answering, he asked her a question.

"Why did you come to St. Augustine?"

The ice was broken.

Both laughed, and perhaps their hands met in a little tighter pressure.

It was not long before a gladsome light came into Angela's eyes, for Lawrence had told of his love, and she——

There was no need to tell of hers, for her eyes were flashing brightly, her cheeks were flushed, and her every action showed that her heart was given into his keeping.

"Angela, I have deceived you," he said, at length. "I have done wrong in speaking as I have, for I have forgotten myself. Let me tell you my story, let me——"

"Do not mind the past, John," she said. "We have all the future before us."

"But, Angela, dearest, there is a stain of crime on my name."

A slight tremor shook her frame, but she clasped her hand the tighter.

"I care not for the past," she answered. "I know that whatever you may have done, or been accused of doing, has passed into oblivion, and now you are noble and good."

"But you do not know. Listen, I will tell you; please do not interrupt. It is right that you should know. It is——never mind how long ago, but I was sent to the bank—it was my duty to go, and I cashed some checks. One was a forged one. I handed all the money over to the firm save the amount of that one check, and that I——well, nothing can be gained by saying what I did with the money."

"I was found out."

"The firm would not prosecute, and I was sent away in disgrace; the brand of crime was on my name, and——"

"All the time you were innocent."

"What makes you say that?"

"I feel it—I know it."

"But the world does not. The world holds me guilty, and there are other reasons why I can never reenter the world I left in disgrace."

"Then, dear John, we will go to a new world. We will cross to Europe, and there you shall hold up your head as high as the best of them."

"But, Angela—I could not—I will not consent for you to share a ruined life."

"Sir! what do you mean? My life was saved by you. It belongs to you, and it shall never be another's. If you do not take me—I—don't think me unmaidenly, you asked me to be your wife, and now want to withdraw; that I shall not allow."

She had spoken boldly and bravely, but even as she did a tear dropped on his hand, and he knew that she was suffering keenly.

"Angela, dear one, I shall never love another. I shall never again speak of love to mortal other than you. Time may clear my name, and if it does I may—nay, I will, come to you, for I love you."

With that she had to be content.

No other condition would he allow, but she had such faith that even that made her happy.

As they walked back to the city they were met by Mr. Winan and Mr. Anstruther, who had become fast friends.

"A letter for you, Angy," said her father, as he held up a square, perfumed envelope.

"For me? Who is it from?"

"You did not think I opened it, did you?"



"What a tease you are! I see the writing; it is from Gladys. She is a happy girl. Don't you think so, Mr. Lawrence?"

"She must be, seeing that she is a friend of yours."

"Flatterer!"

She placed the letter in her pocket, and Lawrence, who was trembling and excited, though he did not wish to show it, knew what a sacrifice she was making in not reading the letter.

By one of those little excusable subterfuges, Lawrence pretended he had some business with Mr. Anstruther, and asked to be excused for a few minutes.

No sooner had he stepped aside than the letter was withdrawn, and Angela was deeply interested in her friend's words.

"So you were a fireman in Washington? Well, you arrived just in the nick of time. When do you return?" asked Anstruther.

"Never, sir. I resigned from the department before I left the city."

"Indeed? And might I be allowed to ask, without being considered rude, what you intend doing now?"

"I really cannot say, sir. I shall seek for work in Florida—or perhaps go to Mexico."

"Would you—could you—no, I don't mean that exactly—how would you like to have the management of a large orange-grove?"

"I should like it."

"But would you accept such a position?"

"Indeed, sir, I would had I the chance, which isn't likely."

"Why is it not likely?"

"Because I have no references. I cannot prove my ability. I cannot refer to the past, and so, you see, I should have to be taken on trust, and that is not businesslike," and Lawrence smiled as he spoke, though he knew he was condemning himself.

"Lawrence, I like you, and I can put you into possession of as pretty a little house as there is in the State, and can give you three hundred acres of oranges and lemons to look after. The salary—well, we will not quarrel over that. Say, is it a bargain?"

"Mr. Anstruther, I would like to talk with you further about it. There are things you ought to know——"

"Take your own time. The offer holds good for some weeks, anyway, at least until I go North."

A little, glad cry from Angela attracted Lawrence's attention, and he turned to look at her.

She had the letter still in her hand.

She beckoned Lawrence to her.

He was not sorry to be by her side again.

"John."

How sweet the name sounded as she pronounced it, and yet he had always despised it.

"John, I have such strange news from Gladys."

"Strange news!" he repeated.

"Yes; you know, she had two brothers——"

"I have been told so," he answered, as calmly as he could.

"She loved the younger most. She was so fond of him, he was her favorite, her pet——"

"Yes—yes."

"But they said he was bad. He disgraced the name, and his father turned him out of the house."

"Yes! Does Gladys—Miss Vernon tell you so in the letter?"

"Yes, the letter is all about that. She never believed her brother guilty——"

"Bless her!"

"What did you say?"

"If he was innocent, it was nice to have some one who believed in him," he explained.

"Yes, she always believed in him, and when he died—he did die in Florida somewhere. I have been told, she nearly died herself. Not because of his death so much, but because his name had not been cleared, and so he suffered unjustly, and died believing others thought him guilty."

"It was better that he died," suggested Lawrence.

"No, it was not, for had he lived he would have been restored to his home again."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I am sure of it. Listen to what Gladys says," and Angela opened the letter, and read: "And now, dear Angela, let me tell you some news. My poor brother is dead. I wish, oh, so much, that he were alive, for now his name would be cleared."

"Cleared, did you say?"

"That is what Gladys says. It appears that her brother was accused of keeping bad company. A man named Cairns——"

Lawrence started.

"He has stated that it was Bryce Vernon who owed him money, and Bryce has confessed everything—his father knows all, and he would give all he possessed if he could bring the dead to life again. Mr. Lawrence—what—is—the—matter?"

Angela might well ask, for Lawrence had turned very white; then he began to stagger, and it was only by clutching hold of Angela that he was saved from falling.

"What is it? Are you not well?" she asked.

"Yes—I—I—— No, I don't think I am well, I am exhausted—I—did Gladys say that?"

"Tell me, John—tell me, what can I do for you?" she asked.

He was on the point of telling her that Lawrence Vernon was not dead, but changed his mind.

"I—must—try and get home," was all he said, and Mr. Winan assisted him to a hack.

"Poor fellow! he has overstrained himself. I like that lad as well as if he were my own son," he said to Anstruther, and Angela whispered in her father's ear:

"He will be very soon, dear papa."

## CHAPTER XI.

### LOVE'S ELYSIUM.

John Lawrence nearly fainted. His name was clear at last. Now he could return home and take his rightful place in society, and his heart beat more quickly when he thought he would be able to give an untarnished name to Angela.

But when he reached the Magnolia a new feeling had taken the place of the old.



He was suddenly ambitious.

"Did not Mr. Winan say he liked a man better who made, rather than inherited, a name?" he asked himself; and then, with a sudden resolve, he exclaimed:

"I will make a name. I will make my name respected, and the country shall know that the obscure fireman is worthy of honor."

Instead of giving way to his nervous prostration, he walked the floor, building castles and peopling them with creatures of his fancy.

"I will see if there is any faith in woman," he said.

As he paced the floor, he soliloquized:

"Angela thinks me poor—so I am. I will accept Anstruther's offer and work on the orange-grove. I will ask her if she will share a poor man's lot, and if she consents I will prove that there is such a thing as love in a poor man's home."

He thought it all out, and the effort did him good.

Early the next day he called on Angela.

He knew she was to leave for the North in a few days, for she had promised to be bridesmaid for his sister, Gladys.

"Angela, will you walk with me?" he said awkwardly enough.

Her heart palpitated almost audibly, for she guessed that the crisis in her life had come.

She was not long over the necessary preparation, and with flushed face she left the house with the man she loved more than all else on earth.

He sought the quietest and most secluded place, and we can readily understand why.

Sentiment such as theirs loves privacy. No third person, no prying eye or ear was wanted.

"Angela, you raised me to the highest pinnacle of bliss yesterday."

"Did I? I am so glad."

"You led me to believe that under other, or favorable, circumstances, I might raise my eyes to your level."

"Did I? Then I am sorry."

She answered calmly but sorrowfully.

"Sorry! Angela, love is sacred. It knows no station, thinks of no worldly advantage. Kings have stooped to lowly maidens, and peasants have dared to raise their eyes to the purest of earth's daughters. And yet you are sorry—"

"Only that you should think I—I—had led you to think I I—I—"

She knew not how to express herself, but her very hesitation was enough to make him the happiest man in Florida.

"I plead my cause, even though I may be presumptuous. Angela, I love you. From the first time I saw you, when I clasped you in my arms in that—to me—fortunate fire in Washington, I loved you. Then your name was made known to me, and I loved you still more; for you were Angel by nature as well as name. I am poor. If you wed me, it will be a different life to what you have been accustomed, for I would not have you depend on your father, it must be on your husband alone. Could you brave the world and become the wife of a man on whose name is the brand of crime?—though of that, God knows I am innocent—the wife of a man who is nameless and poor?"

He had spoken hurriedly, fearing that his courage might give way.

She placed her hand on his arm, and looked up into his face.

His eyes were moist with tears of joy.

Hers was no uncertain voice.

"I love you," she said, "and loving you, I will esteem it a great joy to share your life, even though it be one of poverty and hardship."

"My own sweet love!"

"My prince!"

They walked on and on, talking of all those sweet nothings which interest lovers.

They did not notice how time was passing.

Only one thing they knew—that they were living a world of perfect bliss.

Heaven's gates had been opened to them, and they realized the greatness and grandeur of love.

"I leave to-morrow—" she said, with a sigh.

"So soon?"

"Yes, dear, and you?"

"Will accept Mr. Anstruther's offer and settle on his orange-grove. And may I—expect you to join me soon?"

It seems very prosaic now it is written, but John Lawrence was very methodical and businesslike.

Again her face flushed, for she was thinking of the promise her father had made.

Only the night before she had said how she regretted leaving the sunny Florida, and yet she must be at her friend's wedding.

Then it was that Mr. Winan had promised she should return as soon as the wedding was over.

With the sweetest little blush on her cheeks, and in the softest whisper, she answered her lover:

"As soon as you like, dear."

His heart gave a big bound. He would take her at her word and ask for leave of absence, meeting her in St. Louis on her return from the wedding.

He told her of his resolve, but she gently chided him.

"Why travel all that way? I shall return here—"

"You will?"

"And we can be married quietly—"

"As befits your husband's station," he interjected, in what seemed to be a tone of bitterness.

"That is cruel."

"I did not mean it, my darling."

"I hope not. Do you know, dear, I would rather be your wife than Empress of Russia?"

"Bless you, my precious! But, Angela, we are too happy—"

"Is that possible?"

"I mean we have not thought of what your father will say."

"I can answer."

"You can?"

"Yes; he will say he is so glad. He said only last night he wished you were his son."

And so the couple chattered and built air-castles, happy in their youth and love, and dreading only the parting on the morrow.



## CHAPTER XII.

## WEDDINGS.

The wedding of Gladys Vernon to Egbert Somers was an event which will be talked of as long as any of those who were present are alive.

The expenditure must have been lavish in the extreme.

Everything which upholsterers, art-decorators, and florists could devise to make the Vernon mansion like a fairy-palace was done, utterly regardless of cost.

A large floral horse-shoe was over the door of the grand parlor, and people almost exclaimed that it was a shame to spend so much money on a floral-display; but when they saw the altar, made of the choicest flowers, with an emblematic allegory of the sanctity of love and marriage, all worked out in roses, some did say that the cost of the flowers alone would keep a family for a whole twelve months.

Gladys looked superbly happy, and only once did a shadow pass over her face, and that was when some one inadvertently said that her happiness would have been complete had her brother lived to see that day.

By her side was Angela, blushing at the thought that very soon she, too, would take unto herself a husband.

But some frowned when it was whispered that she was to marry a poor man, and one person received a look, which she will never forget, when Angela happened to hear her suggest that Lawrence was a fortune-hunter and had caught a big prize.

"I have never seen your fireman," said Gladys, when alone with Angela in her own room.

"No, dear, but when you do you will say he is noble and good."

"I hope so, for your sake. I owe him a debt of gratitude for saving Bryce."

"But he is so good—so noble—so learned, if he would only go out into the world—but then I should lose him."

"Why should you?"

"Because I am so unworthy. He is one of the world's heroes, while I am only a poor, commonplace girl."

"You are a dear, good creature, anyway."

The hour approached for the ceremony.

Wilson Vernon had aged very much since he had lost his boy, but he looked happy, for his face reflected his daughter's joy.

The clergyman had the book in his hand, and all were in readiness.

All?

No, for the bride was not there.

She was sent for, and was found crying.

Crying on her wedding-day!

It was strange, but she smiled through her tears.

The ceremony was over; Gladys Vernon was now Gladys Somers, and a happier bride was not to be found in all America.

The happy pair were going on a tour across the continent, to taste the glories of Californian life, before they settled down to the routine of every-day existence.

The next day a glowing account was sent to John Lawrence in his far-away Southern home.

"Do you know, I had an offer of marriage last evening," said Angela, "but I told him that I was to be married within

a month. Better to be candid, my dear, is it not? But what if anything should happen to delay our marriage? I could not say it as easily as I write; but I think I should die if such should be the case."

We can easily imagine how delighted Lawrence was with that admission, and how eagerly he urged the upholsterers forward to have the little nest perfect for his bird when he should bring her home.

He wanted the time to fly on eagle's wings, and felt almost as certain of death as Angela if his love should be crossed.

The days passed and a month had been added to the oblivion of the past.

John Lawrence had a pretty little home furnished, and on the next day would fully complete it by bringing home a wife.

He had strictly objected to any assistance from Mr. Winan, save as regarded Angela's personal property and her piano.

All else was of his own purchasing, and from his own money.

He had become enamored with his work, and believed that orange-growing was better than the arduous duties of a fireman's life.

The wedding was quiet and very unostentatious, but the bride was none the less happy.

Mr. Anstruther and his family were present, and a few local friends.

John Lawrence was a model manager.

The grove was in better condition than it had ever been, and Mr. Anstruther was delighted.

A whole year had passed since our fireman had accepted the offer to become a manager of an orange-grove.

He had bought ten acres of land adjoining the grove, and had planted the ground with oranges and lemons.

Everything seemed to prosper with him, and the name of Lawrence was already honored in the legislature, where he had been sent by his neighbors, and there was considerable talk of the advisability of sending him to Congress, or, better still, the United States Senate.

For John Lawrence had made for himself a name.

He was respected by all parties, and his judgment was accepted without question.

How proud Angela was of him!

He had but one secret from her, and that at first did not trouble her; but when he began to absent himself from home for days together, she began to be alarmed.

She never doubted him.

It was only a seeming neglect, and he was still the most loving husband, but he would not tell her his secret.

No woman likes a man to have a secret.

It wouldn't be one long, did she know it; but while admitting that, she still thought it unkind not to tell her.

One day he rushed into the house with as much frantic enthusiasm as a schoolboy.

"My little wife, how would you like to leave Florida?" he asked.

"I do not want to leave it. I am so happy."

"But a trip to Europe?" he suggested.

"Not even a trip to Rome, and Venice, and Paris would tempt me, for——"

"I know what you are thinking—we cannot afford it."



"You know we cannot."

"But your father often urged——"

A happy light broke in on her face.

All the time of their married life her father had wanted to give them some of his wealth, but her husband had always refused.

Now she thought he was relenting.

"Often urged that a European trip would do us both good," he added.

"Yes, dear, but you know we are learning economy."

"But if I have sold my little grove?"

"You have not, dear, have you?"

"You assert first, and question after. Suppose I were rich?"

"What has come over you, dear?"

"I will tell you. I can now relieve your mind. There shall be no more secrets between us—at least, not after another month; but I can tell you now. I have been away a great deal——"

"Yes, business called you."

"That was so. Do you know what I carried away with me in those little parcels?"

"No."

"Soil. You open your eyes. My dear, our grove is worth more money than all the oranges that will be grown in Florida this year."

She almost fancied her husband had been affected by the heat, she knew he never drank.

"Yes," he continued, "I have been offered half a million dollars for it."

She shuddered.

He must have met with some calamity which had effected his brain.

"It is true. The land is rich with phosphates. We have formed a company to work it. Mr. Anstruther's grove is worth over a million. The company consists of your father——"

"Does he know?"

"Of course, he has been in the secret. Then Mr. Anstruther, and Mr. Wilson Vernon."

"Gladys' father?" asked Angela.

"Yes, and Bryce Vernon is to be secretary, while I am to be general manager, or, if I prefer it, European agent, and that position I think I should like."

"It is like a dream."

"Yes, is it not?"

"Your father's name has been sufficient to float the company. He secured the Vernons and Somers, and has managed everything. They do not even know the exact locality of the phosphate-beds."

"But is it all safe?"

"As the bank, nay, safer than any bank, for we cannot fail."

"You are sure?"

"My Angela, you do not doubt me, do you?"

"No, but it seems all so strange."

"It is strange, and perhaps you will think I have taken leave of my senses when I tell you that I have offered to buy—in fact, have bought—ten thousand acres of land."

"Ten thousand acres!"

"Yes; I got it for a dollar and a half an acre, and one acre of it is worth just now twenty thousand dollars."

"My brain is in a whirl, I must be dreaming."

"No, dear, it is all reality. On the first of next month, the directors are to dine with us, so that we may all become acquainted, for I want to know the Vernons."

"Bright fellow, that son-in-law of yours," said Senator Call to Winan, later in the day.

"Yes, but he has some strange fads."

"Has he?"

"I should think so. He took a fancy to Wilson Vernon—why, no one can say, for I do not think he has ever seen him, and he packs me off, bag and baggage, to offer him a clear hundred thousand of the stock in the new phosphate company at ten cents on the dollar, and an offer of the secretaryship to that rascal, Bryce."

"Is it a swindle?"

"What?"

"The phosphate."

"No, senator. An English syndicate has examined the property, and offers Lawrence a clear two million for his land, and about twenty acres of Anstruther's."

"Great Scott! Any more land to be bought cheap around there?"

"No; Lawrence has an option on two thousand acres, and if all pans out well he will be many times a millionaire."

"Who'd have thought it? And he was only a common fireman."

"A fireman—yes, but never common."

"You know what I mean—he was not a chief."

"No. A most extraordinary man, and my daughter took a fancy to him the first time she saw him."

"It is wonderful. I would like to get in on the ground floor of the phosphate company, for I hear it is above par even now."

"Yes, it fetches a hundred and four already."

Every one was talking about the phosphate-beds in Florida.

And every one was praising the financial sagacity of John Lawrence.

He was hailed as a benefactor of the State, for he had discovered, not only a source of great wealth, but just what the orange-growers stood most in need of.

His election to Congress was now sure; both of the great parties wanted him, but he cared not for political honors.

He was working for his State, and had already planned out a scheme for holding a subtropical exposition, devoted to Florida's wonderful productions.

He was daring as a fireman, he was bold and energetic as an orange-grower, and as a financier he had proved his worth.

His name was the best known in the State, and all were ready to do him honor.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CLOUDS DISPELLED.

The Tropical Phosphate Company (Limited) was to hold an important meeting at the residence of John Lawrence on the first day of May.



A dinner was to precede the financial and business meeting.

With the exception of Anstruther and Winans, no one member of the board of directors had ever seen Lawrence.

All thought it strange, for several meetings had been held in St. Augustine, and also in Ocala, and once all the directors had visited the orange-grove and inspected the phosphate-beds.

But in every instance Lawrence had been prevented from being present.

Some actually thought him a myth, a name put forward to obtain better terms from investors; but sweet Angela Lawrence was known to them all, and she, with all her plump beauty, was anything but a myth.

The day of the dinner arrived, and Mr. Winan arrived early.

Gladys and her brother and father were to drive over at four o'clock.

To the consternation and surprise of all, on that eventful May the first, John Lawrence had such a violent headache that he found himself compelled to remain in bed.

Some very ugly rumors were whispered about when he did not appear at four o'clock, and one of the directors hinted that perhaps the beds had been "salted," in other words that it was a swindle, the phosphate having been carted there instead of being the natural product.

But the beds proved to the contrary, and the mystery remained.

The dinner was to be en famille.

Not a formal dinner, at which only those financially interested were to be present, but ladies were to join in the epicurean feast.

"You must not wait for Mr. Lawrence," said Angela, "he will join you if he can, later."

His absence was a dampener of pleasure, but Mr. Winan sat the head of the table, while Mr. Anstruther occupied the other post of honor.

Every time there was the slightest noise every one looked at the door, expecting to see Lawrence enter.

The ladies—three brides, for neither had been married much over a year—were nervous and excited.

Angela, herself, was almost angry with her husband.

The dinner progressed, and all were becoming reconciled to the absence of the host, when a servant entered, bearing a short note, addressed to Mr. Winan.

It read:

"I will join you for coffee; he prepared for a great surprise."  
J. L."

To the lover of mystery the note was welcome, but those solid financiers thought such strange conduct unbecoming a business man. Poor Angela was troubled, for she feared the heat of the day had affected her husband's brain.

At last the nuts and coffee came on the table, and expectancy was at its height.

The door opened and Jack Lawrence entered.

He looked like a very sick man.

As he crossed the room he faced Wilson Vernon.

With almost a cry, he exclaimed:

"Father, don't you know me?"

Turning around he added:

"Bryce—and you, Gladys, do not you recognize your brother—your brother Lawrence?"

Gladys had left the table and thrown her arms around her brother's neck.

No one doubted.

The identification was complete.

Lawrence Vernon was not dead, but had achieved fame and wealth while under a dark cloud.

Explanations were given, and no one was more pleased than Bryce, who intended for some time to confess all.

"I waited," said Lawrence, "until this moment for my vindication. Even my dear wife did not know that I was the brother of her friend Gladys. I was determined that no one should respect me because of my position, but that I would win name and fame, or die unknown and unhonored."

There was too much emotion for any manifestation by cheering, but each one pressed Lawrence's hand, and certainly none of the ladies had dry eyes.

He had lived through the shadows of a great suspicion and had come out triumphant.

Egbert Somers grasped his hand.

"I said you were the greatest hero I ever knew," he said, "and Gladys shared my opinion, though she did not know the hero was her brother."

"He saved my life," said Bryce, with emotion; "though Heaven knows I did not deserve it at his hands."

It was never really known how the story of the death at Jacksonville got about, or who it was that had died there, and been buried as Lawrence Vernon.

But some poor fellow had genuine tears of sorrow shed over his death, and they may have availed much for him in the realm of the Great Unknown.

"And now, Angela Vernon, what have you to say?" asked her husband.

"Nothing, except that you are the dearest, best, and darlingest husband in the world," she said, coining a new word in her excitement. "But I would rather—if you please—be known as Lawrence."

"I have thought so, too," said her husband; "and I am sure my father will not take it amiss if I reverse my name and be known as John Vernon Lawrence."

"You have made a name, my boy, and may well be proud of it."

A year has passed since that memorable meeting.

The phosphate-beds have more than realized the anticipations of the first promoters.

Great fortunes have been made, and John Lawrence took his place among the wealthiest men of the time, but he never forgot his struggles against poverty, and when he was at the height of his fame he remembered the brave firemen among whom he had passed so many months.

He had achieved success, and had risen through Flame to Fame, honored and respected by all who knew him.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 422, will contain "The Mystery of the Haunted Ship; or, Bowery Billy in a Diving Suit." Out Jan. 21st.



# BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY

NEW YORK, January 14, 1911.

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## THE DRUMMER BOY'S STRATAGEM.

By S. O. MORRIS.

Ping! ping! the bullets sounded, as they hailed in a storm of lead against the walls of the old house.

They cracked the crumbling bricks, broke the tiles on the roof, and flew in through the windows, destroying window frames, shutters, furniture, and ceilings, making clouds of mortar, splinters of wood, and fragments of glass and earthenware fly about, whistling and rebounding, hissing and screaming, as if thirsty for human blood.

The attack was fierce, but the defense was stubborn. The garrison of the old house consisted of about sixty veteran French soldiers.

They were a detachment from the army commanded by General Hoche, who had been dispatched to the famous western province of La Vendee to put down the Royalist rebellion which raged there in the year 1794.

They had been sent out to a considerable distance from the main body of the Republican leader's forces, with orders to occupy a lone house which stood on a height overlooking a wide extent of country.

They had barely reached the building, when they found themselves attacked by an overwhelming number of Royalists, who burst suddenly upon them from a belt of woodland below, and opened a furious fire.

The Republican troops hastily sought shelter within the house, which was an old and solid brick structure. They barricaded the doors, rushed to the windows, and vigorously returned the shower of bullets rained upon them by the assailants.

From time to time a soldier shooting from the window would fall back on the floor. He would be dragged aside, and a comrade would press forward to take his place. Wounded men were staggering from room to room. Several already lay dead or dying. The enemy's line was drawing nearer and nearer.

The captain of the besieged was in the topmost room of the house, where he directed the defense, launching out his commands like pistol shots. He was tall, thin, and austere-looking, with grizzled hair and beard.

His appearance was a singular contrast to that of a bright-faced young drummer beside him. The boy was only fourteen years old, and this was the first fighting he had ever seen. It was only a few days since he had said good-by to his widowed mother in their little home in the Quartier Latin

of Paris, and proudly marched along the street with his regiment.

And now he had posted himself beside the captain, with pale cheeks, but with eyes glittering with excitement, and not a trace of fear in his set face. He stood on tiptoe, and peered out of the small upper window, heedless of the bullets that struck around him.

He could see the rebels closing in on the house with triumphant yells, that showed their belief that their prey was well within their grasp. They were advancing upon the front and on both sides; the back of the house looked down a steep incline, where the ground was so broken and rough that they did not attack it from that quarter.

The captain's face, hitherto stern and unmoved, began to show signs of uneasiness as he saw the apparent hopelessness of the position. Was there no way to save the lives of the brave fellows intrusted to his command?

Suddenly, as if a thought had struck him, he drew back from the window, and laid his hand somewhat roughly on the young drummer's shoulder.

The boy looked up, and his glance met the stern gray eyes of the captain fixed upon him with a gaze that seemed to penetrate his very soul.

"Josef Barra!"

The drummer put his hand to his cap in a military salute.

"Josef Barra, have you courage?"

Josef's eyes flashed.

"Yes, my captain!" he said.

The officer led him from the room, and went to a window at the back of the house.

"See, Josef," he said quickly but calmly, as he pointed out of the window, "take your drum, and slip out of the back entrance of the house; make your way down the hill, and into the woods beyond, then sound the 'advance' on your drum as loud as you can. The enemies will think that reinforcements are coming up, and you may save the detachment."

The boy's eyes flashed more brightly than ever now. He did not speak, but, buckling his drum to his side, he hurried down to the ground floor. A moment later, with a final "God help you!" the captain had sent him out by the door at the back of the house, which was closed and barricaded behind him.

The captain returned to the upper windows, and eagerly watched the boy flying down the descent. Would he reach the woods unobserved by the enemy, or would they catch sight of him? If they did, the stratagem would hardly succeed, even if they did not finish the drummer's career with a ball from one of their muskets.

On and on the boy hurried, concealing himself as best he could, by taking advantage of the irregularities of the ground. Breathlessly the captain watched him, all heedless of the whistling and hissing of the bullets in the front of the house, the angry and excited voices of the sergeants and corporals, the sharp cries of the wounded, the falling of mortar, the crashing of furniture.

The drummer boy is far down the slope now; he has nearly reached the shelter of the woods. The captain measures with his eye the distance still to be traversed. Two minutes more, and—

One of the sergeants dashed into the room, and told him that the enemy, though they had not ceased firing, were waving a white cloth, to show that they demanded a surrender.

"Do not answer," cried the captain, and he ran hastily downstairs to join his men.

The lower story was full of the wounded, lying helpless on the floor, or supporting themselves against the walls, which were spattered and splashed with blood. Here and there was a corpse; smoke and dust covered everything.

"Courage, men!" called the captain. "Keep your posts! Help is even now at hand!"

A feeble cheer broke out among the brave defenders, desperate as the case seemed. The rebels had drawn nearer



still. Their fierce faces could be seen through the smoke; among the noise of firing could be heard their cries, calling on the besieged to surrender, and threatening massacre.

The fire of the garrison slackened again, and despair began to show itself upon their faces. Already more than one window was without defenders, and it was clear that the house could not be held much longer.

Suddenly one of the wounded men raised himself from the floor with a shout of triumph.

"They are coming, comrades! I hear General Hoche's drums! You are saved!"

And the poor fellow fell back in a swoon.

The captain's straining ears had caught the same sound. A drumbeat, loud and clear, rose from the woods on the enemy's flank. It was sounding the advance.

"Help is near!" was the cry among the defenders, and again their spirits rose. Every man who could stand made for the windows, and again a hot fire was poured forth on the rebels.

Signs of disorder were soon visible among the Royalists. The drumbeat had amazed and terrified them. It must mean that Hoche's troops were close at hand, though they had believed him to be miles away.

The captain saw the enemy's doubt and hesitation, and feared that they might discover the trick he had played, though none of his own men had done so. He took a bold step.

"Open the doors!" was his sharp order.

The barricaded entrances were thrown wide.

"Charge! The enemy is in confusion, and help is near!" was the next command. And the little band of soldiers dashed forth from the old house with a wild hurrah, and fell upon the astonished foe with flashing bayonets and gleaming swords.

That ended the Royalists' hesitation. Bewildered and panic-stricken, and believing that resistance was useless, they fled right and left, turning in all directions, since they knew not from which side to expect the next attack. The handful of Republican troops swept before them a force four times as numerous as themselves.

The chase was not kept up very far. The enemy was soon so scattered that further pursuit was useless, and the victorious soldiers returned to the house which they had so bravely defended, to hold it, according to their original orders, till the main division of the army came up.

The captain now told his men the stratagem which Josef Barra, the drummer boy, had carried out so successfully.

But where was Josef? He had not returned to the house. His drumbeat was no longer to be heard. What had become of him?

The captain's orders were to hold the position he occupied, and he was bound to obey them; still, he could not allow the boy, whose courage and skill had saved the detachment, to be lost or taken prisoner without an effort to help him. So strong, indeed, were his feelings on this point that he determined to go himself in quest of the brave young drummer.

With half a dozen picked men he descended the hill, following the path taken by Josef. He reached the wood, but nothing was to be seen of the boy.

Presently, however, the sound of harsh voices reached the captain's ears. It came from a little distance to the left, and the officer, motioning his men to remain where they were, stole forward in that direction to reconnoiter.

He had not gone very far when he saw before him, in an open glade of the wood, a sight that thrilled his heart. There was Josef, and around him was a group of rough-looking peasants—stragglers from the body of rebels who had been driven away from the house. In their random flight they had stumbled upon the boy as he was making his way back to his comrades, and they seemed as if they meant to vent upon him their rage at the defeat they had suffered.

"Shout 'Long live the king, boy!' the captain heard one of them say, pointing his long bayonet at Josef's body.

"Never!" was the reply. "Long live the republic!"

The Royalist thrust savagely at the boy. At the same instant the captain reached the spot at a bound, and felled the murderer with a terrible sweep of his saber. He called loudly to his men, and the tramp of their feet was heard as they rushed through the wood. The rebels were again panic-stricken at the sudden attack, and fled at their utmost speed.

The captain turned to Josef, who had fallen under the thrust of the Royalist's bayonet.

It was too late! The lifeblood was flowing fast from a fearful gash in his side. The captain knelt beside him, powerless to help the wounded boy, and the tears fell from his eyes, that had seen a score of battles unmovable.

"Captain," said Josef faintly, "do not weep."

The veteran officer took off his cap.

"Josef Barra," said the rough old soldier, "I am only a captain, you are a hero."

## TRIED FOR HER LIFE.

By T. J. ALTON.

"Oh, what shall I do? No friends and a heartless mob crying out against me! These men won't listen to reason! I am innocent. Oh, will no one help me?"

"Please, ma'am, I'll help you."

The answer came from a boy about twelve years old.

"What can you do? Who are you?"

"Me! My name's Tim—Tim, the Yuba Nugget."

"You have a brave heart; but what can you do among so many wild men? They say I killed my husband, but I am innocent. Have you a mother?"

"Me have a mother! Never had one. Miners all call me Tim. I love you, and I will save you, lady. Tim does not believe the men."

"Bring her out! String her up! Have no mercy on her!" came from a gang of enraged miners.

"We tell ye, sheriff, she did it! She wanted his money, and would have been on her way to Frisco long ago, only we caught her," spoke a burly mountaineer.

"Speedy justice, sheriff; let us have her, and no more of this weakness."

"My men, she is a woman. Boys, have you not mothers, or sisters, or perhaps wives in some far-off land? Think of them; put them in her place. One week ago you were raving mad to welcome and greet this young creature. Are you men—have you not some noble or generous impulses lingering within your breasts? Does not conscience dictate to you that this is not true manliness?" pleaded the sheriff.

It was in one of the wildest portions of the Sierras that this scene was taking place. One of the miners had been mysteriously murdered the night before. His wife, a beautiful girl of nineteen, had only been in the camp a few days. She had traveled hundreds of miles, over rugged plains, to meet her husband. He had married her in the East, and left her alone while he went to California to gain a fortune. At first his letters were frequent; then they stopped suddenly, and Louise Allen did not hear from him for months, and so she determined to join him at the mines. She traveled night and day for many weeks, until one fine morning she reached "Charmed Hollow," and found the one she loved. His letters had been lost. Henry Allen was overjoyed to receive his little wife.

One morning, not many days after her arrival, she was appalled, on waking, to find her husband dead, with a bowie knife through his breast, and herself bathed in his blood. She called for assistance. The camp was in confusion. Every evidence was against her. She was arrested by the sheriff before the miners were aware of it. The sheriff, a brave man, believed her innocent, and wanted mercy shown her, notwithstanding the strong evidence against her.

Tim, his son, was a child of the mountains. His mother died when he was very young, and the miners brought him



up. He was a bright, intelligent boy; rugged, hearty, and full of boyish hopes and energy. He had been in the Allens' hut several times. Louise had never seen him, but he saw and admired her beauty.

A woman to him was a curiosity.

"Bring her out!"

"Miss Allen, I'll go."

He went to the door and climbed upon a barrel, a pistol in each hand. The men were infuriated. Tim cried out loudly, but their voices drowned his. Finally one of the leaders spied him.

"Why, boys, look at the Nugget—even Tim is with us."

"No, Tim is not with you. You are trying to kill pretty Miss Allen. The first man who comes near I will shoot!"

Every man was silent.

"Why, Tim, don't you know Mrs. Allen killed her husband, and deserves to die?"

"No, Miss Allen is innocent. If you love Tim, as you say, let her go."

The men held a consultation. The sheriff pleaded for his fair prisoner; his heart yearned to set her at liberty, and he felt for her as well as his son.

"Tim, we like you; you are our own child. We'll try Mrs. Allen to please you. If she can prove that she is innocent, we will let her go; but if we find her guilty, she swings!"

A court was established; the sheriff acted as judge. Mrs. Allen was brought forward, and the trial proceeded. She stated all she knew; how she awoke and found her husband dead; how she called for assistance, and how she was overwhelmed when taken into custody.

Tim was missing during the trial. The jurymen were ready to deliver the verdict. The sheriff then spoke:

"Gentlemen, are you agreed?"

"Boss, we find her guilty," the foreman said.

The miners proceeded to arrange the rope. Mrs. Allen was led under the limb of a tree. She looked beautiful even in her deadly terror.

"I am not guilty," she said, with a quiver in her voice. "You may kill me, but I am innocent, and some day, when too late, you will find it out."

The word was given:

"Haul up the rope!"

"No! No! No!"

Tim came running toward them, an Indian following him.

"Miss Allen is innocent. Tim has found the man who killed Henry Allen."

The rope was dropped. Tim came among them with a bowie knife in his hand. It was the one found in Henry Allen's body. The Indian stalked forward.

"Me Joe. You know Joe? Heap big chief! Missee Allen no kill Henly. This Long Jim's knife. Long Jim's shirt in a ditch all covered with blood. Joe find him."

There was a movement in the crowd. A man was running away. He mounted a horse like a flash of lightning. Joe, the Indian, followed, caught him, and brought him back.

He, the contemptible coward, confessed that he killed Henry Allen to procure his money, and even while speaking, pulled out his pistol and shot himself.

A shout rent the air. Louise Allen was carried around the camp. Tim had saved her. She was a brave girl, and displayed a great deal of fortitude.

The rough and impulsive miners made up a large purse and tried to persuade her to stay among them; but this she could not do. She started for San Francisco. Tim and his father followed her shortly afterward. They met her at the hotel at which she was stopping while waiting for the steamer to carry her home. She would not attempt another trip across the plains.

Mr. Fremont, the sheriff, met his fair prisoner quite often, and before the steamer arrived a strong attachment sprang up between them. A few days before she was to sail, Mr. Fremont asked Louise to become his wife, and remain in

San Francisco. She accepted him, and was happy in her choice.

Tim is now a prominent young lawyer in the Golden City, and his mother often tells how he won his first case and saved a woman's life, and also won for her a kind husband.

### KING GEORGE AND SPORT.

King George, who recently became patron of the amateur and professional football associations, has been interested in football for some time.

He rarely misses a service football match, whether army or navy, and takes his elder boys with him when possible, for they are enthusiastic lovers of the game, and there is an idea that he may be able to attend the cup final this season.

As a schoolboy he was almost as good at football as at cricket, says the *Gentlewoman*, and of late years he has kept programs of all the games he has witnessed.

These programs are among his interesting collections, which include his world-famous one of stamps, that equally famous of walking sticks, the property of the late king, which he naturally bequeathed to his son, and of sporting trophies.

When King George, by the way, was traveling in the colonies, he received from an anonymous donor a very handsome book of stamps inscribed: "A tribute from one of King Edward's sons to his future successor."

### PICTURESQUE PUNISHMENT.

When Sir Charles Euan-Smith, who died not long ago in England, was in the market place of an Afghanistan town, he was fired at by a native. He lodged complaint with the Ameer, who appeared to take no notice of the incident, merely remarking: "That's all right." Sir Charles complained again, and met with the same reply. He still thought that the Ameer was treating a serious matter with less consideration than it deserved, but thought it advisable to say no more on the subject.

About a week afterward he was invited by the Ameer to ride with him. They rode for some distance outside the town, and passed gibbet after gibbet. At length Sir Charles said: "Your highness has been busy of late."

"Oh, no," replied the Ameer; "they are your little lot." He had taken all the members of the would-be assassin's family, and hanged every one of them.

### TO MAKE AN EGG STAND ON ONE END.

To make an egg stand on one end on any polished surface seems very extraordinary, yet it can be done, even on a looking-glass. Now, from the form of an egg, nothing is more liable to roll, and on nothing more so than a looking-glass. To accomplish this trick, let the performer take an egg in his hand, and, while he keeps talking and staring in the face of the audience, give it two or three hearty shakes; this will break the yoke, which will sink to one end and consequently make it more heavy, by which, when it is settled, you may make it, with a steady hand, stand upon the glass; this would be impossible while it continued in its proper state.

### OVERLOADED.

Boy—"Say, mister, shall I carry yer satchel? Do it for a dime."

Dude—"My satchel is not heavy."

Boy—"Well let me carry your cane then."

A small boy gives his views on a very pertinent subject in these graphic words:

"Some boys is honestest than others, and there's no way to tell them apart except you pretend to forget your knife, and watch 'em jump for it. The one that jumps last is the honestest one."



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